THE LIBERAL IDEA IN INDIA
SUNIL KHILNANI

GOOGLE AND THE NEW INTERNET BUBBLE
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THE NEW REPUBLIC
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MOMENT OF TRUTH

What the Democrats should say about Iraq

Peter Beinart
Michael Crowley
Ryan Lizza
The Editors

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Updated daily. On the Web at www.tnr.com.

THE NEW REPUBLIC
A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

MAY 24, 2004 WASHINGTON, D.C. ISSUE 4,662 VOLUME 230

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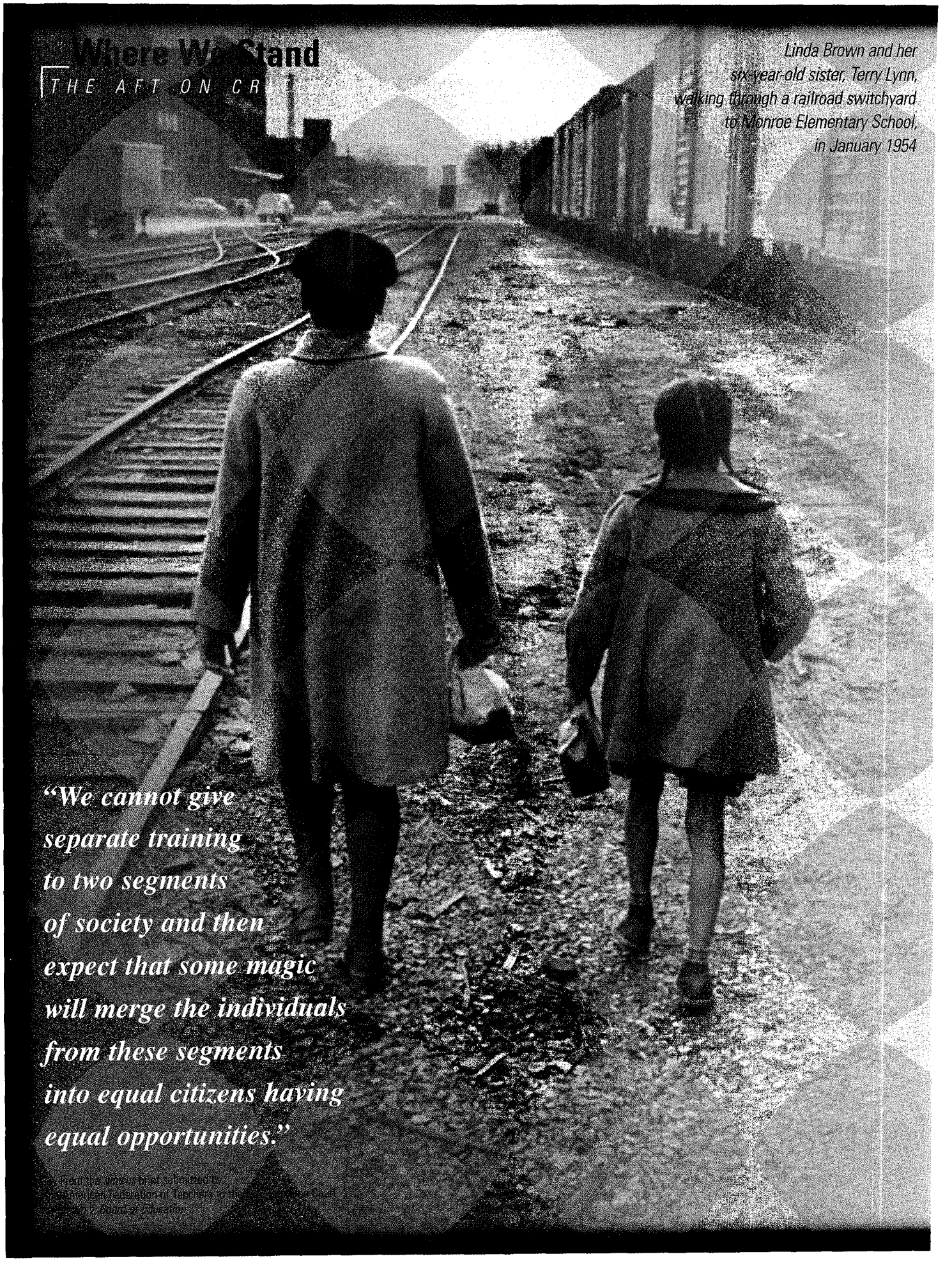

Linda Brown and her six-year-old sister, Terry Lynn, walking through a railroad switchyard to Monroe Elementary School, in January 1954

"We cannot give separate training to two segments of society and then expect that some magic will merge the individuals from these segments into equal citizens having equal opportunities."

From the amicus brief submitted by the American Federation of Teachers to the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education*

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50 YEARS AFTER BROWN v. BOARD:

The Promise and the Challenge

Every day, in the early 1950s, Linda Brown walked a long and dangerous route to school, even though another public school was just blocks from her home. But that nearby school was for whites only, and Linda Brown was African American.

Today, we know that little girl's name because she and her family were among the courageous individuals who challenged the system of legally sanctioned segregation that forced her to make that daily walk. The result was the U.S. Supreme Court's unanimous 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that outlawed segregated public schools. This month marks the 50th anniversary of that historic event.

African-American students have made enormous progress since the *Brown* ruling. Graduation rates have risen sharply, and many more young people are going on to college. But half a century later, the goal of ensuring that *all* children have equal access to a good education remains elusive.

De facto school segregation still exists in many communities. Inequities in resources of every kind are key factors in the persistent achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students. As the Supreme Court said 50 years ago, and which still holds true today, separate but equal is inherently unequal.

Today's Civil Rights Frontier

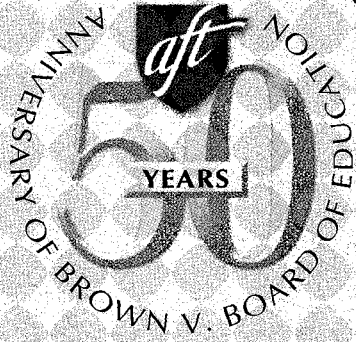
The American Federation of Teachers has a long and proud history of fighting discrimination. The AFT was the only education organization to file an *amicus* brief on behalf of the *Brown v. Board* plaintiffs. We expelled segregated local unions, losing thousands of members from our Southern locals. AFT members and leaders were among the organizers of the 1963 March on Washington, and worked for key civil rights legislation like the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Today our charge is to fulfill the potential of *Brown* by continuing to strengthen our public schools and help close the achievement divide between disadvantaged minority students and their more advantaged peers. We can achieve this by advocating high standards for teachers, greater access to intensive early education programs, smaller classes, and other approaches proven to help overcome educational disadvantages.

Opportunities and Results

All children can achieve academically—if they have the opportunity, resources, and support. In fact, data show that reading and math proficiency levels for urban students are rising. But children who, like Linda Brown, are not given an equal opportunity to learn continue to lag behind.

As the Supreme Court noted in its opinion 50 years ago, "it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education." To fulfill the promise of *Brown*, we must make sure that every child has the opportunity not simply for an education, but for a *high-quality* education. In doing that, we will close the achievement divide. Securing this goal is at the heart of what AFT members do every day, and it is the only acceptable legacy of this landmark decision.



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Sandra Feldman, President
American Federation of Teachers

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CORRESPONDENCE

DOESN'T COUNT

ALAN WOLFE ASSURES US THAT we need not fear religion in public life, for most Americans subjugate their religious beliefs to their much stronger commitment to the separation of church and state ("Among the Non-Believers," April 12 & 19). Rather than being as presumptuous as author Susan Jacoby, who believes, according to Wolfe, that she can "decide which religions are really religious and which are not," Wolfe takes the humbler position of deciding that all American religions are not really religious. Was it not only a few pages earlier that Leon Wieseltier ("Under God and Over") argued that we risk losing the robust spiritual content of religion if all references to God are not really references to God?

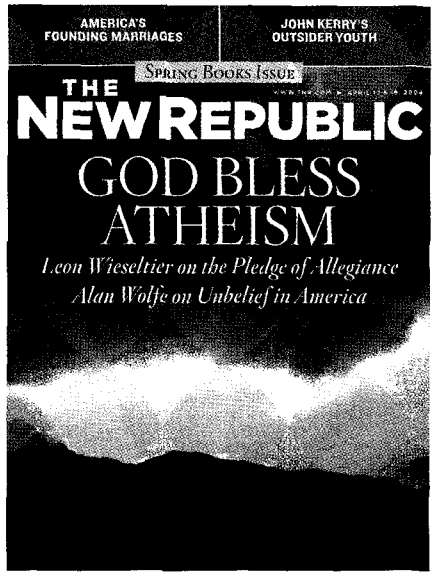
PHILIP A. REED
South Bend, Indiana

LONG SLOG

JOSHUA KURLANTZICK'S ARTICLE "Dictatorship.com" focuses on unrealistic expectations and loses sight of what the Web is accomplishing (April 5). Kurlantzick fails to understand that technologies don't topple regimes or build democratic societies—people do, and that takes time.

The Internet is a tool for distributing information. Like other tools, such as the printing press or television, it cannot directly oust a tyrannical regime or change a society overnight. It may take a generation to see significant change. But programs initiated by the State Department, by USAID, by public/private sector partnerships, and by others are already assisting countries in developing democracy. With our strong support, 175 countries came together in 2003 at the World Summit on the Information Society to discuss the ways in which the Internet and information are transforming the world. Together, these countries reaffirmed the individual's right to freedom of expression—a major step forward in freeing the world of tyranny.

Still, the Internet requires a steady supply of electricity; unfettered telephone access for local, national, and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GOD BLESS ATHEISM
Leon Wieseltier on the Pledge of Allegiance
Alan Wolfe on Unbelief in America

global communication; a certain level of literacy on the part of the user; and the willingness and mindset to communicate openly with others. In many countries, these conditions do not yet exist. Moreover, the Internet itself is new to many: In 2001, half of the world's countries had been connected to the Internet for less than six years. Thanks in part to U.S. programs, an estimated one billion more users since 2001 will soon be surfing the Web in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. With the jump in numbers—plus the advent of local content and the growth of local technical capabilities—citizens will be more invested than ever with a thirst for information and a budding understanding of how to organize, spread, and use it. Additionally, the Web's size, decentralization, interconnectivity, and peer-to-peer capabilities make it much more difficult to control than traditional media. Yes, filtering software can be used by authoritarian regimes to exert control, but time is against them. A small corps of censors can block many websites, but can they read every e-mail? How will they cope as usage doubles, then quadruples?

Meanwhile, in Senegal, President Bush's Digital Freedom Initiative (DFI) is helping a fast-growing credit union automate its administration, freeing up more funds to support local entrepreneurs. In Peru and Indonesia, the DFI will help develop distance learning, telemedicine, entrepreneurship, and new trade opportunities for small enterprises. We have seen that, when individuals have greater control over their economic circumstances, they begin to take a more active role in shaping the politics of their countries. This process doesn't happen instantly, but economic liberalization and individual empowerment are major steps on the road to democratization. It is far too early to write an obituary for the Internet as a tool for democratization. The Internet's influence on the spread of democracy is just beginning.

AMBASSADOR DAVID A. GROSS
U.S. Coordinator for International Communications and Information Policy
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.

JOSHUA KURLANTZICK RESPONDS: Ambassador Gross does not offer any evidence of how these policies are contributing to democratization. What's more, the countries he mentions—Indonesia, Peru, and Senegal—are all democracies, not authoritarian states. He does not address any of the countries I focused on in my article—actual authoritarian nations like China, Laos, and Burma. ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC (ISSN 0028-6583), Vol. 230, Number 19, Issue 4,662, May 24, 2004. (Printed in the United States on May 13, 2004.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated April 12 & 19, June 7 & 14, July 5 & 12, August 16 & 23, September 13 & 20, November 29 & December 6, and December 27, 2004 through January 10, 2005) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Mandy Hansen at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 466-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $79.97; foreign, $119.97 (U.S. funds); Canada, $99.97 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling). © 2003 by The New Republic, LLC. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. For hard copy reprints, call (202) 508-4444. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, and CD-ROM are available through ProQuest, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone (800) 521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 420235, Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: letters@tnr.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call (800) 827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

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To Improve Teacher Quality, Support Beginning Teachers

Kurt M. Landgraf,
President & CEO, ETS

Good teachers produce good students. But how do we produce good teachers? And how do we keep them? One important way is to improve teacher professional development, starting with "induction" programs for beginning teachers.

Effective induction programs are built around a well-defined learning curriculum, combining mentoring with high-quality professional development to help new teachers reflect on and improve their classroom practice. Recent research shows the importance of such programs.

Examining the issue in a study for the Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy at the University of Washington, researcher Richard Ingersoll found a 40 percent turnover rate among first-year teachers who did not participate in induction programs. This was more than twice the turnover rate of teachers who had received high-quality induction support.

ETS's research on the California Formative Assessment and Support System for Teachers complements Ingersoll's findings. In the California program, experienced teachers who were trained as mentors worked with beginning teachers on critical aspects of teaching. Our results show that high quality mentor-based induction programs can help improve teacher practices and bolster student achievement.

But induction programs need to be taken seriously to be effective. It isn't enough to assign a new teacher an informal mentor and hope the two get together.

Schools need to train and support their mentors to be coaches who understand the elements of good teaching. They need to equip mentors and beginning teachers with a learning curriculum so that they learn to analyze and improve classroom instruction. And they need to provide time and support for beginning teachers and mentors to work together effectively.

Given current teacher shortages, teacher retention is critical. High-quality induction programs work. Yet only 15 states both require and finance mentoring programs for all novice teachers, despite the availability of funds for the purpose.

As stated in *Where We Stand on Teacher Quality*, ETS believes all states should establish induction programs as part of a continuous, high-quality professional development program designed to support teachers throughout their career.

Teaching is one of the most challenging – and one of the most important – jobs in our society. It's time that we equip educators with the tools they need to get the job done.

At ETS, we're listening to educators, parents and policy-makers. We're learning from sound research. And we're leading the effort to achieve both informed public policy and informed educational practice.

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Educational Testing Service

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All Too Human

TRB
FROM WASHINGTON

SINCE THE ABU GHRAIB CATASTROPHE broke two weeks ago, Bush officials have struck many of the right notes. But they have struck one wrong one over and over. "This is not America," President Bush told the Arabic-language network Al Hurra. "This is not who American servicemen are," added Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage. Said national security adviser Condoleezza Rice, in an interview with Al Arabiya, "Americans do not do this to other people."

But, of course, Americans *did* do to this to other people—that's why Rice was on Arabic television. We know what Bush and Rice and Armitage meant: that most Americans don't torture prisoners and most abhor what happened at Abu Ghraib. But the categorical insistence that something does not happen, right after it just did, suggests more than simply a desire to distinguish the guilty few from the innocent many. It represents an unwillingness to modify—even in the face of undeniable evidence—the rhetoric of absolute American purity that has characterized this administration's public statements since September 11. That rhetoric was always wrong, and, until the Bush administration lets it go, it will not have fully learned the lessons of Abu Ghraib.

President Bush has always had a distinctive way of praising people. When he nominated John Ashcroft to be attorney general, Bush said the Senate should evaluate "Ashcroft's heart and his record." About ill-fated Labor Department nominee Linda Chavez, Bush spokesmen Tucker Eskew said the president wanted to shine a "light on her big heart." When Bush first met Russian President Vladimir Putin, he famously said, "I was able to get a sense of his soul." As *National Review*'s Rich Lowry has pointed out, these formulations make no sense: How can the Senate "evaluate" someone's heart? In politics, you judge a person's public performance; you don't—and can't—judge their essence. And, since evaluating someone's moral core is impossible, Bush's demand that others do so is really a demand that they trust his judgment. His formulations render empirical evidence irrelevant. So, in 2000, when Democrats attacked him for not urging the removal of the Confederate flag from the South Carolina statehouse, Bush told voters not to "judge my heart based on a position on who ought to be flying a flag over what Capitol." When Al Gore criticized him for prioritizing tax cuts over health insurance for children, Bush responded, "If he's trying to allege that I'm a hard-hearted person and don't care about children, he's absolutely wrong." But, of course, no one was judging Bush's heart—they were judging his actions, which was precisely what Bush was trying to avoid.

When Bush praises the United States, he does so in similar terms. After the Florida recount, he told the *The Washington Times*' Bill Sammon that he would "seize upon the inherent spirit of America." In this year's State of the Union, he cited America's "good heart." As in his rhetoric about individuals, Bush dwells on America's essence, not its actions. Our basic goodness is non-falsifiable and self-evident.

And, because America naturally does the right thing, it need not be constrained by the international rules that keep more fallible nations on the straight and narrow. Since taking office, the Bush administration has killed a proposed U.N. convention regulating the trade in small arms. It has refused to ratify a treaty banning land mines. It has wrecked efforts to enforce a treaty banning biological weapons. And it has waged a fierce campaign to exempt American troops from prosecution by the new International Criminal Court. The Bushies have threatened countries that develop nuclear weapons with preemptive war—while simultaneously developing new classes of nuclear weapons designed not for deterrence, but for actual battlefield use. Yet they seem mystified when other countries express alarm. Don't they know that the United States would never use such weapons unless it were absolutely justified?

Bush officials deny that their refusal to submit to international treaties represents an unwillingness to be held accountable. To hear them tell it, they simply want to be held accountable by U.S. laws and institutions, rather than supranational ones. But, in truth, the Bushies are hostile to domestic oversight, as well. In 2001, the administration reversed a Clinton-era policy and encouraged Cabinet departments to, whenever possible, reject Freedom of Information Act requests. It has denied the General Accounting Office's request for documents about Vice President Dick Cheney's energy task force. And it has opposed one bipartisan inquiry into September 11 and undermined another. The implicit rationale behind this opposition is simple: We can be trusted to do the right thing. During oral arguments in the Jose Padilla case, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg suggested the dangers of a detention system with no judicial oversight. "Suppose the executive says, 'Mild torture, we think, will help get this information,'" she said. Deputy Solicitor General Paul Clement's reply was classic Bush: "Well, our executive doesn't."

Except that sometimes it does. Americans, it turns out, are not immune to the dehumanizing pressures of war. If our soldiers, and our leaders, generally act better than those of other countries, it is not because of their inherent virtue. It is because this country's founders, realizing that Americans were deeply fallible, developed ingenious systems of accountability and oversight. Throughout U.S. history, those systems have endured and deepened. But they were horribly absent at Abu Ghraib. And the Bush administration—in the name of sovereignty, national security, and presidential power—has weakened them in the government at large.

Ironically, the only way for the United States to promote human rights after Abu Ghraib is to acknowledge that human rights and Americanism are not the same thing. We must admit what the rest of the world knows—that Americans do evil, and oppose freedom, just like every other people on earth. What makes us different is a political system open and accountable enough to restrain our abuses and correct our course. We act better than other peoples because we realize that, in our hearts, we are no better than them. Our greatness stems from our humility about ourselves. And that is what President Bush doesn't understand, even after Abu Ghraib.

PETER BEINART

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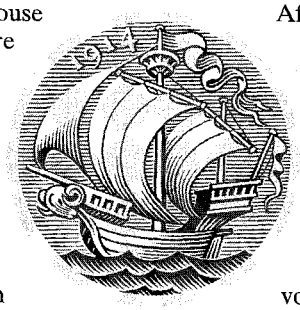
Gut Check

THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION consistently lowballs the cost of major legislation, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are no exception. The pattern is by now familiar: The White House offers up a cost estimate just high enough to promise members of Congress they won't have to cast another tough vote, but not so high that voters question the cost of the war. Before the war in Iraq, former Office of Management and Budget Director Mitch Daniels estimated the total cost of the conflict at $50 to $60 billion. Last fall, the White House came to Congress asking for $87 billion more, though some defense experts said this would not be enough. Last week, the administration—which had planned to put off more funding requests until after the election—asked Congress to appropriate $25 billion for military operations. Once again, it is not nearly enough.

At nearly $5 billion per month, the tab for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is rapidly approaching the average monthly expenditure for the Vietnam War. Even with the additional $25 billion, members of the House and Senate Budget Committees have concluded that at least another $50 billion will be required next year, and many defense experts say even this figure underestimates the true cost. In recent weeks, after all, the insurgency has gained steam, the administration has announced plans to maintain troop levels at 138,000 through 2005, and intensified combat operations have exacted a steep price in equipment and manpower lost.

How, then, did the administration come up with the $25 billion figure? Simple: $25 billion is just enough to get the White House through the November elections. Indeed, it doesn't plan to reveal the full tally for 2005 until next January or February. Members of the Bush team, as Republican Representative Curt Weldon, vice chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, puts it, "have come to think that it's politically embarrassing that they need more money to pay for this war." To their credit, congressional Republicans like Weldon have pressed the White House to ask for more money up front. Even better, congressional Democrats, many of whom voted against the $87 billion appropriation last November, have upped the ante, too. "Given the increased tempo of operations as seen in April and the need for the long-term deployment of troops," explained Senator Jack Reed, a Democrat from Rhode Island, "it is clear that this is not enough money." House and Senate Democrats are now drawing up an amendment that would request up to $75 billion for the war.



What's missing is a strong statement from John Kerry, the Democrats' de facto leader. While a Kerry spokesman says he would vote for the $25 billion, Kerry himself has so far avoided the issue. That's no surprise, given the political forces pulling him in different directions: his desire to simultaneously maintain credibility as a wartime candidate while not alienating antiwar voters, his prior vote against $87 billion for fighting and rebuilding Iraq, and his emphasis on fiscal responsibility.

Kerry has no cost-free way out of this dilemma. But he can strengthen his political position while remaining true to his convictions. First, he should join congressional Democrats demanding $75 billion. This would allow him to outflank President Bush in his support of the troops. It would be consistent with his call to add 40,000 troops to the armed forces. And it would reinforce his commitment to seeing through the mission in Iraq. Whatever mistakes the Bush administration has made, it is imperative that we do everything possible to make the best of the situation.

Second, Kerry should demand that Bush pay for the war. If we admit Iraq is an ongoing commitment, then we must treat it as an ongoing expense. Kerry needn't insist the money come from the tax cut, just that Bush find the money *somewhere*. If Bush wants to propose $75 billion in spending cuts as an alternative to partial repeal of the tax cut, he's free to do so. (Of course, he won't, because he knows he'd lose that argument in the court of public opinion.) Tying the tax cut to the war's costs is not extraneous politicization. To the contrary, the shortcomings in Afghanistan and the debacle in Iraq result in part from the administration's desire to fight wars on the cheap, a product of its theological commitment to upper-bracket tax-cutting.

To be sure, Republicans will never allow a vote on paying for the military appropriations, so, in the end, Kerry is going to have to vote yes or no on a bill that merely adds to the deficit. He should vote yes. In so doing, he can partially redeem himself for his vote against the $87 billion. And he can show that he's more honest and more courageous—on both the war and the deficit—than the administration. Sadly, that's not hard. ■

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NOTEBOOK

DUMB AND DUMBER STARRING TOM DELAY AND JAMES INHOFE

TORTURED LOGIC

OF ALL THE CONSERVATIVES WHO have risen to defend the torture committed at Abu Ghraib, none has been quite so strident as Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe. When the Armed Services Committee held hearings on the prison scandal this week, Inhofe intoned, "I'm probably not the only one up at this table that is more outraged by the outrage than we are by the treatment. ... The idea that these prisoners—you know, they're not there for traffic violations. If they're in Cellblock 1A or 1B, these—these prisoners, they're murderers, they're terrorists, they're insurgents." Later that day, he added, for good measure, "A lot of the American people don't know what animals these people are." With these statements, Inhofe managed to cement his reputation as not only one of the most vulgar members of Congress (does he think that rape and the use of attack dogs are appropriate treatment for any prisoner?), but also one of the stupidest. After all, a report by the International Committee of the Red Cross found that 70 to 90 percent of Abu Ghraib's prisoners had committed no crime. But what do you expect from the man *Slate*'s David Plotz reported is "[w]idely considered one of the dumbest members of Congress"? As THE NEW REPUBLIC's Michael Crowley has documented (see "Ill Natured," January 20, 2003), during the Clinton administration, Inhofe decried the Environmental Protection Agency's "Gestapo tactics" and referred to the Agency's chief, Carol Browner, as "Tokyo Rose." In 1993, he vowed never to hire gay staffers because they could be "disruptive in terms of unit cohesion." When a propeller fell off a small plane he was flying in 1999, Inhofe hinted that President Clinton had sabotaged the craft, even allegedly joking about being the victim of "Arkancide." And that's not to mention his call in 1972 for the hanging of Jane Fonda and George McGovern for their opposition to the Vietnam War. So, while we admit to being outraged by the outrage over the outrage, we should add that we're hardly surprised.

James Inhofe

MISSING WORK

ON MAY 11, THE KERRY CAMPAIGN released a statement asserting that its candidate had "fought again and again to extend unemployment benefits for workers left behind in the Bush economy." Why, in the midst of news about Abu Ghraib, was it necessary to bring up unemployment benefits? Because earlier that day, in the Senate, the Democrats had finally forced the GOP to vote on a proposal to extend benefits by 13 weeks (they did it by holding up a vote on a raft of corporate tax breaks). What's more, the Democrats had even managed to rope in twelve Republicans, meaning they were within striking distance of the 60 votes needed for approval. But, in the end, the tally was 59 to 40—one vote shy. Who was the missing senator who scuttled the benefits extension? None other than John Kerry, who was campaigning in Kentucky. Democrats quickly retorted that the GOP had scheduled the vote to embarrass Kerry, and that, had he been there, they would have just wheedled one of the pro-extension Republicans to switch sides. "We were told that, no matter what would happen, [the Republicans] would change a vote in the Senate, and they were not going to let it happen," Kerry said on the campaign trail. Perhaps. Then again, that scenario also provided Kerry—who is trying to deflect accusations that he is a big-government liberal—with an easy way to avoid voting for more benefit spending. That way, he can talk the talk without having to walk the walk. Ultimately, everyone got what they wanted. Except the unemployed.

POLLUTED COVERAGE

THIS WEEK, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION imposed new regulations that will greatly reduce pollution and improve public health, but chances are you didn't hear about them—in part because *The New York Times* buried the story on page A16. The *Times* has a history of exaggerating Bush's bad environmental policies while downplaying the good. On April 4, for example, the *Times Magazine* boldly declared on its cover that the Bush administration is responsible for "the undoing of 30 years of clean air policy." Yet, when, just a few weeks later, Bush's Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued regulations making urban smog standards far stricter, the *Times* ran the story on page A22.

This week, the Bush administration mandated improving the engines in off-road vehicles (such as bulldozers) and reducing the pollutants in the diesel fuel used by such equipment. Previously, the administration had required cleaner-burning engines for regular, on-the-road buses and trucks and deep reductions in the pollution content of the diesel fuel

DAVID COWLES

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they use (think of those black puffs of smoke when trucks and buses start rolling). The new off-road diesel regulations will cut acid-rain emissions from these sources by 99 percent in the next eight years. "Particulate," or fine soot, emissions will also be reduced, preventing an estimated 12,000 premature deaths annually. Total emissions from off-road, railroad, and marine engines will decline by about 90 percent, eliminating the equivalent of millions of cars' worth of pollution.

Emissions caused by the use of diesel fuel are the principal form of pollution not properly controlled by the Clean Air Act. The EPA estimated that, although the new diesel rules will cost the industry $2 billion, they will save $80 billion in health costs. That Bush agreed to the new rules, even though his oil-industry constituents will bear most of the cost, speaks well of him. Too bad the *Times* can't.

ABU GHRAIB IDIOCY WATCH I

"You know, if you look at—if you, really, if you look at these pictures, I mean, I don't know if it's just me, but it looks just like anything you'd see Madonna or Britney Spears do onstage. Maybe I'm—yeah. And get [a National Endowment for the Arts] grant for something like this. I mean, this is something that you can see onstage at Lincoln Center from an NEA grant, maybe on *Sex and the City*—the movie."—Radio host Rush Limbaugh speaking on May 4 about the prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib

ABU GHRAIB IDIOCY WATCH II

"I'm sure that our committees are going to be asking the right questions. ... But a full-fledged congressional investigation—that's like saying we need an investigation every time there's police brutality on the street."—House Majority Leader Tom DeLay on the same subject, May 4 (Thanks to Paul Goode) ■

TNR.commentary

&c.

NOAM SCHEIBER

SAME DIFFERENCE? Jim VandeHei's campaign coverage in *The Washington Post* has generally been first-rate. But a May 9 article headlined "DESPITE RHETORIC, BUSH, KERRY AGREE ON MANY ISSUES," strikes me as way off-base. If read literally, it's so banal as to be pointless. (There were many issues on which Roosevelt and Stalin also agreed ...) And, if you follow through on the obvious implications, it's dangerously naïve.

The piece is so self-consciously counterintuitive (and we at TNR are not exactly averse to counterintuition) that its "to be sure" paragraph feels like it should have been the thrust of the piece, and the rest of the piece feels like it should have been relegated to a "to be sure" graf. Here's what I mean:

> To be sure, Kerry and Bush offer voters different agendas, styles and maps for winning the war on terrorism and managing the economy. On cultural issues, in particular, the two are far apart: Bush is opposed to abortion rights and appoints federal judges who share his view; Kerry supports abortion rights and would appoint only those judges who share his view. Bush favors a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage; Kerry opposes it. The most obvious domestic policy difference centers on health care.

Those sound like pretty significant differences to me. VandeHei's mistake is that, despite the piece's headline, he badly confuses rhetoric with policy—or at least puts way too much stock in rhetoric. He writes that:

> The 19 battleground states, generally speaking, are more conservative than Kerry's Massachusetts and more liberal than Bush's Texas, *so both candidates are tailoring their messages* to the middle America audiences they calculate will select the next president on Nov. 2 [emphasis added].

Yes, both candidates are tailoring their messages to moderate voters in swing states. But we've now had three-plus years of evidence testifying to the fact that Bush has no intention of following through on his moderate-sounding assurances. "Bush says he has the same policy solutions, but his record does not equal what he says," Democratic strategist Jenny Backus tells VandeHei. So "the issue of credibility becomes the issue, not the policy." Exactly. And, when it comes to being a moderate, Bush has absolutely zero credibility.

Campaign Journal

RYAN LIZZA

FLUSHED OUT: Mark Gersh, of the National Committee for an Effective Congress, is one of the best analysts of U.S. voting trends around. In the latest issue of the Democratic Leadership Council's *Blueprint* magazine, Gersh has a sharp article that includes the observation that Republican exurbs—areas beyond a city's close-in suburbs that are no longer fully rural, but not yet fully suburban—are starting to mirror the inner cities in their level of partisanship:

> When people move to [exurbs], they tend to start voting Republican by significant margins. [Exurbs'] rapid growth throughout the 1990s and into the current decade has given the GOP the kind of concentrated geographical support areas that are highly susceptible to intensive get-out-the-vote efforts. An analysis of the big Republican sweep in Georgia in 2002 showed that exurban growth since the previous midterm election of 1998 was the single biggest factor in the outcome.

In 2000, I spent Election Day hanging out in Newark, New Jersey, with Democrats who specialize in turning out black voters. In 2002, I spent Election Day in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, with leaders of the GOP's new get-out-the-vote (GOTV) operation, the 72-Hour Task Force. In Newark, the work was easy. Nine out of ten blacks vote for Democrats, so GOTV targeting was strictly racial. The "flushers" would pour into black neighborhoods and try to get every voter they could find to the polls. In South Dakota, the Republicans worked a suburban neighborhood that had a mix of Democrats and Republicans. This meant that months of phone calls and door-knocking to learn how the residents would vote had to precede the actual flushing. On Election Day, the GOP flushers carefully skipped over the homes that had already been identified as Democratic.

What Gersh suggests is that the exurbs are becoming so reliably Republican that, just as in the black precincts of Newark, the tedious process of research and sophisticated targeting is becoming unnecessary. Turning out Republicans is becoming much more simple. The larger implication is that one of the most dominant demographic trends in America is the self-segregation of Democrats and Republicans. That may be good for the flushers, but it's bad for the country.

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Campaign Journal
WWJKD?

BY RYAN LIZZA

IRAQ HAS BEEN a vexing issue for John Kerry. Every time he takes a position, the domestic political ground seems to shift under his feet. He supported the use-of-force resolution in 2002, only to find that Democratic audiences hated the war and were flocking to Howard Dean. So Kerry adjusted his rhetoric to sound more like the Vermont governor. Then, once assured of the nomination, he began tacking back to the center to court moderate, general-election voters. Now, just as much of the country is moving left on the war, Kerry has moved right. He supports more troops if commanders in the field want them and has called for a high commissioner in Iraq who can bypass the U.N. bureaucracy. What's more, after opposing last year's $87 billion Iraq supplemental, he is prepared to support Bush's new $25 billion request.

This shift comes as public support for the war is plummeting. Asked in a recent Gallup poll if it was worth going to war in Iraq, 54 percent of Americans said it was not, an increase of 18 points since January. Forty-seven percent of Americans now want to withdraw some or all of the troops from Iraq immediately. These views are clearly affecting the public's support for President Bush, whose overall job approval is at an all-time low of 46 percent.

That Kerry appears to be standing steadfast in the face of growing public opposition to his own recommendations—and growing hand-wringing on the right—may be a function of his brand of liberal realism, which never embraced a Pollyannaish view about what we could accomplish in Iraq. For all the twists and turns in his rhetoric, Kerry never bought into the neoconservatives' grand designs for the Middle East. "I talked to John about this in September and October of 2002, in August, September, and October of 2003, and as recently as last night at nine forty-five," says Jonathan Winer, a longtime friend and foreign policy adviser to the senator. "There has been a tremendous continuity, a tremendous concern about bad choices and wanting the country to be cautious." This concern seems to have made Kerry realize that we need to stick it out in Iraq. But there are problems with that stand. The big question is whether, when confronted with them, the Democratic candidate will stay the course himself.

IT RECEIVED LITTLE attention, but two weeks ago Kerry detailed what he would do in Iraq if he were president right now. The speech, at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, was shaped by Kerry's foreign policy kitchen cabinet. Rand Beers, the former National Security Council counterterrorism aide who resigned in disgust from the Bush administration, chairs the group, which includes outside big-name advisers like Sandy Berger, Madeleine Albright, and Dick Holbrooke, as well as less well-known people like Winer and Nancy Stetson, Kerry's longtime Senate foreign policy aide. The early drafts of the speech were penned by Bill Woodward, an aide to Kerry in the early '90s and a former writer for Albright and Michael Dukakis. "He is a secret force within the Democratic Party," says Winer of Woodward. "He's playing a very important role behind the scenes. He's very sober and has a low tolerance for B.S." Wendy Button, a much-praised former speechwriter for Hillary Clinton and John Edwards, who recently joined the Kerry campaign, wrote the later drafts. Of the brand-name advisers, aides say Holbrooke had perhaps the biggest role in shaping the content of the speech.

The speech laid out several proposals for Iraq, all of which echo Kerry's past calls to get Iraqis and the international community more involved. The senator endorsed U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi's plan for an interim Iraqi government. He called on Bush to get NATO to help train Iraq's new army, take control of its borders, oversee the northern part of the country, and perhaps assume responsibility for the Polish sector, where it already plays a small role. Kerry also wants to appoint a high commissioner for Iraq—an internationally respected figure, not bound by the U.N. bureaucracy, who would work with the United States, the interim Iraqi government, and the world community to pave the way for elections, the drafting of the new Iraqi constitution, and the reconstruction. Finally, Kerry argued that Europe and Iraq's Arab neighbors need to be convinced that Iraq's success is in their own self-interest and that they should therefore help create a viable Iraqi security force, without which "there is no successful exit for us and other nations."

These are all practical and worthy ideas. But there are three problems with Kerry's plan. One is that it was conceived and unveiled before Abu Ghraib. Since the prison scandal exploded, Kerry has been campaigning on a tightly disciplined message-of-the-day schedule that has emphasized domestic issues like health care. He has paused to renew his call for Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's resignation and to express disgust at what was done by the American jailers, but he hasn't recalibrated his ideas to the dramatically changed situation. There's been no official word on whether he wants to move up the date of elections, and no comment on whether Abu Ghraib has given him second thoughts about sending more troops to Iraq or speeding up their departure. (Advisers around Kerry, however, acknowledge that the scandal may alter things. "The prison situation does accelerate the need for a change of control of Iraq back to Iraqis, because a foreign occupation clearly won't be tolerated at a political level much longer," Winer says.)

The second problem with Kerry's Iraq plan is that Bush seems to be pursuing it himself. Bush long ago embraced Brahimi. At his April 13 press conference, the president

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hinted that he wants NATO to police Iraq's borders and take over for the Poles. Over the next few weeks, Bush will have a series of diplomatic opportunities to convince old allies to help us in Iraq. He will go to Paris to meet with President Jacques Chirac on June 5 and then commemorate D-Day. When he returns to the United States, he'll attend the G-8 summit in Sea Island, Georgia, and then fly to Ireland for the U.S.-EU summit on June 25. Then it's off to Istanbul for the NATO summit on June 28. The massive protests that will greet Bush during his travels could remind Americans how low our standing in the world has sunk. But some Democrats concede that the president's diplomacy could lead to more international involvement in Iraq, leaving Kerry without much to criticize. "There's going to be a lot of diplomacy in the next forty-five days," says one senior Democratic foreign policy adviser. "My sense is, we need to get further out. [Bush is] going to get NATO involved, and we're going to be stuck saying 'We need to get NATO *more* involved,' or, 'We should have done this a year ago.' "

Finally, there is the Ralph Nader factor. Kerry staked out what he thought was a responsible position on the war in 2002, only to see an antiwar candidate almost snatch the nomination away from him. With support for the war plummeting, Nader's bring-home-the-troops argument might resonate. This means Kerry finds himself facing the same choices he has faced before: change his position to reflect the public's mood, or stick to his guns and hope the voters respect a principled stand. He tried the former during the primaries. He'd be better off doing the latter now. ■

How the Red Cross failed.

Cross to Bear

BY SPENCER ACKERMAN

WITHOUT EVEN TRYING, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) accomplished something this week that the senators and journalists investigating the Abu Ghraib scandal could not do: They caught Bush administration officials lying about what they knew about prison brutality in Iraq. In his combative press conference last week, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld insisted the military took prompt action against prison abuses as soon as it learned they had occurred. "It was on January 13, 2004, that the allegations first came to light," Rumsfeld said. "On January 14, the next day, a criminal investigation was initiated to examine the charges." But a February report that the ICRC prepared for U.S. occupation chiefs L. Paul Bremer and General Ricardo Sanchez shows this wasn't true. Leaked Monday in *The Wall Street Journal*, the ICRC report revealed "systematic" instances of "physical and psychological coercion, which in some cases was tantamount to torture" committed against "persons arrested in connection with suspected security offences or deemed to have an 'intelligence' value." These conclusions, the report said, were brought to the attention of the coalition "on several occasions orally and in writing ... throughout 2003." Specifically, the ICRC informed the coalition of what it found during and after its 29 visits to 14 prisons in Iraq between March and November 2003, and took some of its conclusions straight to "the highest level" of the occupation authorities. In other words, Rumsfeld didn't exactly have his chronology right.

But, if the ICRC had its way, no one outside the Bush administration would ever have known what it had found. "We would not ever have let this report come into the public domain," says Amanda Williamson, a Washington-based ICRC official. Williamson's disapproval of the leak has been echoed up the ICRC hierarchy, all the way to Pierre Kraehenbuehl, the group's director of operations. That's because the ICRC—the only international body that monitors detention facilities to ensure their operators comply with the Geneva Conventions—monitors prison conditions confidentially and only reports abuses to the offending parties. For decades, this vow of silence has allowed the group to enter some of the most abysmal detention facilities in the world. The ICRC "sacrifice[s] its public voice to gain access," says Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch.

Access, however, can be a curse. One of the lessons of Abu Ghraib is that the ICRC's silence meant its findings could be safely ignored. Although the organization warned of systemic abuse of Iraqi detainees by military intelligence personnel throughout 2003, the Pentagon didn't open an investigation into the methods its intelligence officers were using in Iraq until April 23 of this year. Indeed, though the first bullet point on the ICRC report's list of "methods of ill treatment" was the practice of placing hoods over the heads of detainees for hours and even days, Major General Geoffrey D. Miller, the former warden of Guantanamo Bay now supervising U.S. prisons in Iraq, only ended the practice after pictures of hooded prisoners being sexually degraded surfaced in the press. Miller's response shows the limits of the ICRC's private approach to human rights abuses—and the dire need to supplement it with something more public. "Governments exclude [human rights groups from monitoring by] saying, 'We've given access to the ICRC,' " says Harold Hongju Koh, an assistant secretary of state for human rights in the Clinton administration.

THIS IS NOT to say the ICRC doesn't perform vital humanitarian work. Among the more important functions the ICRC fulfills through its access to prisoners is registering detainees and passing messages to and from their families—a crucial safeguard against state-conducted disappearances in places like Chechnya. In fact, the solemnity of the task is precisely what leads to the

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ICRC's policy of confidentiality: Abandoning it would risk losing access to some of the world's most nightmarish prisons. "Just being the only independent organization that has the only face-to-face contact with people who are [by] their very nature shut off from the outside world also has an enormous impact on them as individuals," Williamson says. "We would never want to shut that opportunity off."

But, while its confidential recommendations can sometimes stop individual abuses—the ICRC report makes clear that its April 2003 appeal to British forces "had the immediate effect" of ending hooding at the Umm Qasr internment camp—they are ill-equipped to stop systemic ones, especially those that governments condone. And, in those cases, the ICRC's strict silence risks depriving detainees of a potent check against abuse: public outrage. The U.S. interrogation system in Iraq provides a perfect illustration. The ICRC visited Abu Ghraib as late as mid-October and warned authorities of abuses it had "directly witnessed," yet similar or worse offenses continued into December. As the report makes clear, that was no accident: "Several military intelligence officers confirmed to the ICRC that it was part of the military intelligence process to ... use inhumane and degrading treatment, including physical and psychological coercion." That process was very likely set from above. Last summer, Miller visited Iraqi prisons, at the behest of Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence Stephen Cambone, to offer recommendations on extracting information from detainees. "The Red Cross's method doesn't work well in that context," says Roth. "It's designed to bring low-level abuses to [the attention of] guards committed to respecting international law. In this case, many of the problems with abuse started at the top."

Human rights activists have been working for over a decade to find something that does work. They say the answer isn't to scrap the ICRC's confidential style, but to use it as a wedge to make governments accept a role for human rights inspectors, like Human Rights Watch, whose function would be to name and shame. "I think the question is, given that they've made this organic arrangement [with governments], how do we piggyback on it?" Koh says. In April 2002, the U.N. Human Rights Commission offered a solution: the Optional Protocol to the U.N. Convention Against Torture, which proposed a new international body, known as the Subcommittee on Prevention, to conduct "unrestricted" inspections of "any place under [a state's] jurisdiction and control where persons are or may be deprived of their liberty." The subcommittee would operate independently of the ICRC and carry a different mandate: If a state refused to provide full access, or to heed the subcommittee's recommendations, it would be authorized "to make a public statement on the matter." The protocol likely would have forced the United States to open detention facilities in Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay to human rights monitors who could speak out, something the Defense Department has consistently refused. Had those monitors visited U.S. detention facilities in Iraq, they would surely have seen—and publicly condemned—the same abuses discovered by the ICRC.

But, when the protocol came up for a full General Assembly vote in December 2002, it ran into a major obstacle: the Bush administration. In a State Department fact sheet issued before the vote, the administration said it opposed the new rules because of their optional nature, which would exempt "many of the worst human rights offenders." (Not that the United States attempted to make the protocol binding on all states.) But the real motive for the White House's opposition was its conception of the war on terrorism, which "has caused the United States to regard human rights as either an inconvenience or a luxury it can no longer afford," as New York human rights lawyer Kathleen Peratis wrote. Ultimately, the vote was 127 to four, with the United States voting no and placing itself in the ignominious humanitarian company of Nigeria.

FOR THE TIME being, then, the only group overseeing interrogation at U.S. detention facilities is the ICRC. Not that the ICRC necessarily wants it that way. "We've never maintained that people who do work with an advocacy approach do not play a very important and complementary role," says Williamson. "There's certainly a space, and a very important role, for people who ... speak out." Unfortunately, the Bush administration disagrees. In his interview with the U.S.-sponsored Arabic TV network Al Hurra last week, President Bush ducked a question about whether the United States would allow the ICRC, or "other human rights organizations," to visit its prisons, saying only, "Of course, we'll cooperate with the International Red Cross."

After the release of the February ICRC report, it's clear that's not good enough. "Governments that are really trying to clear themselves and to show that they've fixed the problem need to let these [other human rights] groups in," says Koh. "So it's a permissible inference from the fact that they're being denied that they've still got something to hide." That's exactly what the United States can no longer afford. ■

On the Hill

Line in the Sand

BY MICHAEL CROWLEY

CHARLIE RANGEL IS one of Congress's most liberal members. And the Harlem House Democrat isn't shy about showing it. He voted against the Iraq war—railing against chicken-hawk politicians and calling for a draft that would force the children of pro-war elites to fight. When Republicans in Congress offered a resolution honoring American troops last year, Rangel voted against it (on

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the grounds that it seemed to endorse President Bush's unilateralist policies). And, after last month's revelations of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison, Rangel quickly introduced articles of impeachment against Donald Rumsfeld. Throw in the fact that Rangel represents some of the most antiwar constituents in the United States—at a recent rally in Harlem, one of them angrily confronted John Kerry for supporting a continued presence in Iraq—and you might expect him to lead the Cut-and-Run Brigade, with a Naderesque call for an immediate withdrawal of American troops.

Instead, Rangel says that would be folly. "We don't want to just pull out and have every man for himself. We gotta provide some calmness and some degree of peace," he says. He's not alone. Defying polls—and, perhaps, their gut instincts—Democrats in Congress are resisting the urge to demand a retrenchment from Iraq. Some are even calling for a major escalation of American troops and money—outflanking a Bush administration that stubbornly refuses to change its course.

It wouldn't be surprising if congressional Democrats were ready to cut our losses in Iraq. Polls show the war is reviled among Democratic voters. In a recent *Washington Post* poll, for instance, 60 percent of all voters—and 79 percent of Democrats—said the United States "has gotten bogged down" in Iraq. A recent CBS/*New York Times* poll showed that two-thirds of Democratic voters favor withdrawing before the security situation there stabilizes. And Hill Democrats themselves seem to see little hope for salvaging Iraq's future. Last month, Ted Kennedy declared that "Iraq is George Bush's Vietnam." Not long after, an influential Democratic congressman urged me to write an article about current and former military officials, who he says have concluded that America's choice is between leaving Iraq now—or in six months, with hundreds more dead.

Despite such gloom, however, virtually no congressional Democrat besides Dennis Kucinich has publicly declared Iraq a lost cause. "In my view, this war has been a disaster," says Vermont Representative Bernie Sanders, another of Congress's most liberal members. But, he adds, "I think we can't just simply pull out and let that country go to chaos." Instead, most Democrats agree that the United States needs to stabilize Iraq in the short term as a way of preparing for a longer-term internationalization of the occupation.

A MAJOR TEST of how Democrats feel will come during the next few weeks, as Congress prepares to debate an imminent White House request for an extra $25 billion to fund the occupation. The last time congressional Democrats were forced to stand and be counted on Iraq was last fall, when President Bush asked Congress for $87 billion to pay for Iraq. Back then, twelve Democrats in the Senate and more than 100 in the House opposed the funding. This time, despite a recent downward spiral of events, Democrats are expected to be more united around the extra money. "I think there are damn few Democrats who are going to oppose appropriating more money for the troops," says Dave Helfert, a spokesman for House Appropriations Committee Democrats. Notably, Kerry, who voted against the $87 billion last year, signaled that he plans to vote for the new $25 billion.

Why the turnaround? Two reasons. First, however much they may hate the war—and hate it they do, intensely—most Democrats understand that a premature abandonment of Iraq would be a national security debacle. "It's easy for Ralph Nader to say," says a senior Senate aide. "But nobody wants to undermine the troops or the effort on the ground."

Democrats are also getting politically smarter about Iraq. Their grounds for opposing the $87 billion last fall—a lack of body armor for troops, unseemly Halliburton profits, and general administration mismanagement of the war—never penetrated, and Republicans have since attacked them for failing to "support the troops." (Witness the Bush campaign's ads pummeling Kerry's "no" vote.) This time Democrats are determined not to be cast as reckless doves. House Democrats are already planning to outbid the White House's spending request, upping Bush's $25 billion to as much as $50 billion or even $75 billion. (Senate Democrats—whose lead appropriator, Robert Byrd, utterly despises the Iraq adventure—are less certain about their plans.) In calling for more spending, these Democrats will say Bush is again trying to lowball the cost of the war and to defer billions of dollars in needed spending until after the November election. Although Democrats are outnumbered in Congress, their gambit might succeed if it can attract hawkish Republicans, such as Pennsylvania's Curt Weldon, who argues that the administration needs to be more honest about the costs of the war. ("Somehow, they have come to think that it's politically embarrassing that they need more money to pay for this war," Weldon told the *The San Francisco Chronicle* last week. "If they're doing this for political purposes, I think it's stupid. It's shortsighted.")

Calls for more money are not likely to endear Hill Democrats to their constituents, many of whom have spent months venting their anger over Iraq. Last year, for instance, even the antiwar Nancy Pelosi, the House minority leader, found her office occupied by protesters, with red "blood" on their hands, who complained she had not opposed the war strongly enough. "There is a lot of animosity toward me within the Democratic base," says one pro-war House Democrat, "a lot of hard feelings." But Democrats say the stakes in Iraq are too high to kowtow to polls. "Politics is just not part of the equation," says a top Senate aide. "We're looking at a mess and trying to figure out what to do."

That's not to say Hill Democrats have a clear plan for Iraq. For now, they're largely content to watch Bush stew in his own juices. Democrats are "waiting to hear the administration articulate a plan and show some leadership on this," says a senior Democratic aide. Indeed, both House and Senate Democrats say they intend to use the latest Iraq spending request as leverage to force the Bush administration to produce a plan for its future Iraq policy. "Congress should not consider approving a single dime of this funding until

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the administration provides a specific plan with specific details," Byrd said in a statement last week.

Democrats tried that show-us-the-plan approach, to no avail, with the $87 billion request. But, this time, they might have better luck—particularly given the growing irritation of some prominent Republicans, such as Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Richard Lugar, with the White House's near-total lack of consultation with Congress. After the White House announced the coming funding request last week, for instance, the Republican chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Bill Young, promptly issued a statement saying he would "insist on accountability for the expenditure of these funds."

IF CONGRESSIONAL DEMOCRATS do start exerting some leverage over the administration, they may have John Murtha to thank. The 30-year House veteran is a hawkish defense expert who supported the Iraq war and is known for working with Republicans on military issues. His remarks last week were especially dramatic because Murtha is known as a low-key operator who rarely speaks in public. Many Democrats are wary of speaking out against the management of the occupation for fear that Republicans will accuse them of undermining the troops and being clueless about military affairs. So they were thrilled to hear someone with Murtha's credibility—he has traveled to Iraq four times and regularly visits wounded soldiers at Walter Reed Army Medical Center—so boldly challenge the administration's Iraq policy. "We cannot prevail in this war with the policy that is going today," Murtha said at a press briefing with Pelosi last Thursday. "We either have to mobilize or we have to get out." Unlike some Democrats, who blithely call for a quick turnover of control to international forces, Murtha noted that short-term stability would have to come first. "[D]oes anybody believe without military security you're going to attract any allied forces, you're going to get any kind of allied money?"

Pressed by reporters, Murtha said he couldn't actually imagine his "get out" option materializing. "It would be a devastating international blow to us," he explained. Instead, Murtha said, he believes the occupation requires more than 200,000 troops and what he calls "full mobilization of this country." "You almost have to go to a draft," he said. It's hard to envision many Democrats going that far (even Rangel's draft proposal is mainly intended to make a point about social inequity). But, given the catastrophic consequences of abandoning Iraq, it's still a credit to the party that their public face is more John Murtha than Dennis Kucinich. ■

America's Abu Ghraibs.

Abroad at Home

BY JONATHAN COHN

THE FOOTAGE IS not easy to watch: In one clip, a prisoner screams as an attack dog mauls his leg; in another, a prisoner with a broken ankle gets zapped in the buttocks with a stun gun because he's not crawling along the floor quickly enough. These aren't the infamous video from Iraq's Abu Ghraib prison. They were taken in 1996, at the Brazoria County Detention Center outside of Houston. "Welcome to Texas," one guard announces as he literally drags a prisoner across the floor. "Enjoy the ride. It's like Astroworld." Eventually, the tapes ended up on the nightly news, prompting a probe by the FBI, jail sentences for two guards, and a class-action lawsuit that procured, for Texas prisoners, $2.2 million in damages.

The episode was not unusual. Just last month, another videotape of apparent abuse became public; in this one, two inmates at a California youth prison lie seemingly defenseless on the floor while guards assault them, first with fists and later with chemical sprays (the guards claimed they acted in self-defense). And, thanks to a prison population that's growing faster than jail space can accommodate it, the privatization of the prison industry, and a weakening of the laws designed to protect inmates, things only appear to be getting worse. What makes all these trends possible, of course, is vast public indifference: For all the legitimate concern over the abuses in Iraq, neither elected officials nor the public seem particularly worried that similar abuses happen all the time right here at home.

ALTHOUGH PROTECTION FROM cruel and unusual punishment is enshrined in the Bill of Rights, for most of the nation's history, the advocates of fair treatment for prison inmates have fought a lonely and halting battle. In fact, as Harvard University historian Rebecca M. McLennan explains in a forthcoming book, *The Crisis of Imprisonment: Protest, Politics, and the Making of the American Penal State*, in 1865, it was the Thirteenth Amendment itself—which explicitly exempted prisoners from its prohibition on slavery—that effectively stripped convicted criminals of nearly all rights. At least, that's how the courts interpreted prisoner cases until the 1960s and 1970s, when the Warren Court ruled there was "no iron curtain" between inmates and the Constitution—that some basic human rights existed even behind prison bars. Judges began taking the prisoner lawsuits that their predecessors had refused to hear. It was through the lawsuits this ruling spawned that some of the most egregious prisoner abuses of the last half-century were exposed and, to some extent, remedied. In fact, in many instances, federal judges determined abuses to be so widespread that they effectively took over management of the prisons themselves.

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Arguably, the most sweeping—and certainly the most drawn-out—of these decrees governed the corrections system in Texas for nearly two decades. The saga began in 1972, when an inmate named David Ruiz scrawled a 30-page complaint about civil rights violations at his facility and passed them to a judge through his attorney. After a marathon trial, Judge William Wayne Justice declared in 1980 that Texas's entire corrections system was unconstitutional. Over the next two decades, Justice would become the de facto chief administrator of Texas prisons, forcing the state to spend billions constructing new prisons and to end the practice of deputizing inmates to guard other inmates—a practice under which these "guards" routinely raped, beat, and tortured their fellow prisoners.

Despite the evidence of chronic abuses in Texas and elsewhere, these judicial decrees proved highly unpopular, particularly when rulings about overcrowding led to the release of "less violent" criminals—many of whom quickly began committing new crimes. As crime rates soared during the '70s and '80s, fueling public frustration with liberal policies that seemed aimed more at protecting criminals than their would-be victims, state officials began lobbying for relief from the close scrutiny of prisons. They finally got it in 1996 after the Republican Congress passed the Prison Litigation Reform Act, curbing both the ability of judges to issue decrees over prison systems and the ability of inmates to bring lawsuits in the first place.

The measure's supporters justified the change by citing the steep financial burden of complying with judicial oversight and some of the seemingly ridiculous demands judges were making along the way. When introducing the bill on the Senate floor, co-sponsor Bob Dole decried certain judicial orders condemning "a defective haircut by a prison barber, the failure of prison officials to invite a prisoner to a pizza party for a departing prison employee, and, yes, being served creamy peanut butter instead of the chunky variety." But, while Dole and his allies had a point, the new law went too far. "It was good for the judges, since they didn't have to deal with all the frivolous lawsuits," says Robert Perkinson, an expert on prisons at the University of Hawaii. "But it also meant that the legitimate ones couldn't come forward as much. It means we really don't have a good handle on what's going on in the prisons as we did in the early 1990s, which is disturbing, since the size of the prison population has doubled since then."

But, even if we have fewer system-wide examinations of state penal systems, anecdotal evidence of rampant abuse still abounds. *The New York Times*' Fox Butterfield reported this weekend that guards at one Arizona prison routinely make male prisoners wear pink women's underwear to humiliate them, while prisoners at a Virginia facility report they are regularly beaten and made to crawl. In 2000, the Justice Department released a report alleging that guards at the Jena Juvenile Detention Center in Louisiana—which is owned and operated by the Wackenhut Corporation, one of the largest private prison companies in the United States—engaged in routine physical abuse of young prisoners. After subsequent lawsuits filed by the federal government and private plaintiffs, Wackenhut surrendered the prisoners back to state authorities.

And we do have systematic evidence of at least one type of abuse: prison rape. In 2001, Human Rights Watch released a report citing credible estimates that 20 percent of all male prisoners in the United States have been raped. Inadequate supervision by guards, the mixing of prisoner types, and sheer indifference by prison authorities are often what allows the rapes to take place. One prisoner quoted by Human Rights Watch described a story straight out of the horrific HBO series "Oz": When he appealed to the guards for help, prison authorities informed him—in front of the rapist—that they weren't interested in "lovers' quarrels." The rapist continued to assault the man, then nearly killed him by bludgeoning him in the head with a combination lock.

The report suggested that, of all the states, Texas had the worst rape problem—which isn't surprising, given its history. As late as 1999, even as Texas authorities insisted they had corrected the problems prompting the original Ruiz lawsuit, inmates were still testifying about wretched treatment inside the Texas prisons. One prisoner described being locked in an isolation cell, naked, after being doused with pepper spray. Citing accounts like this, Justice maintained his oversight of the system until he was all but forced to end it by a higher court in 2002.

THE GOVERNOR OF Texas, during the final years of the Ruiz oversight, was, of course, George W. Bush. And, according to Perkinson, who is writing a history of the Texas penal system, Bush—like most of the state Republican leadership—seemed much more concerned with throwing off the yoke of federal oversight than actually making sure conditions for prisoners had improved. But, in fairness to the president, it's not as if Democrats around the country have been particularly aggressive about safeguarding prisoners from abuse, either. As Elizabeth Alexander, director of the American Civil Liberties Union National Prison Project, says, the Democrats—and many Republicans—were "completely intimidated by the [infamous furloughed Massachusetts inmate] Willie Horton phenomenon." So, in 1996, after Republicans rolled the prison litigation reforms into the budget reconciliation, both President Clinton and his congressional allies went along without a fuss, refusing pleas to revisit the law in later years.

Then again, it's hard to blame Democrats for their skittishness when the public itself seems so unmoved by stories of prisoner abuse. Even that now-infamous case from Brazoria, Texas—the one that made national news eight years ago—failed to stir much public outrage. The settlement—which the plaintiffs' attorneys accepted after focus groups suggested a courtroom verdict was unlikely to be more

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generous—only left about $1 million in damages after legal fees, to be divided among as many as 700 inmates. As one plaintiffs' lawyer explained to the *Houston Chronicle*, the "jury was not as responsive to the videotape as you would have thought. ... Everybody was of the opinion that is what prisoners should get." ■

Baghdad Dispatch

Cowboy Up

BY JOSHUA HAMMER

IT WAS JUST before dusk at Baghdad's Al Hamra Hotel, and the patio by the swimming pool was humming with activity. "Bushmaster," an Australian security contractor wearing an olive-drab floppy hat, sat at his usual table drinking chilled vodka straight from the bottle. "Have a swig of Stoli, mates!" he slurred across the courtyard to a trio of hulking operatives from Blackwater Security Consulting, the secretive U.S. outfit whose guards had been ambushed and burned to death in Falluja a month earlier. Suddenly, there was a commotion in the lobby, and 30 South African mercenaries wearing khaki shorts and body armor marched single file into the courtyard. Bulging arms covered with multicolored tattoos, shaved heads gleaming, they carried an arsenal of weaponry—black M-4 assault rifles, 9mm pistols, stun grenades, serrated knives. Gathering in a semicircle, they answered a military roll call, barking out their names and ranks in guttural Afrikaans. One of the South African mercs picked up the rifle of an Australian soldier seated poolside, handled it admiringly, then peered down the laser scope at a table full of journalists. "It's like the holding pen for the [South African] Truth and Reconciliation Commission," muttered a food-service provider from the military—a self-described "war profiteer"—seated at our table.

In the last few months, Baghdad's corporate warriors have all but taken over the city. They cruise the streets in late-model SUVs, the long, steel barrels of their automatic weapons protruding from open windows. They've essentially taken over a dozen hotels in the capital. I counted as many as 100 "security consultants," as most prefer to be called, lounging poolside at the Al Hamra on several evenings this week—four or five times the number I saw in my previous visit to the city. As many as 20,000 contractors are currently believed to be in Iraq, and the number keeps growing.

These private armies have assumed many duties normally carried out by troops during wartime. A Virginia-based firm, Custer Battles, guards Baghdad Airport. Erinys, a British company, protects oil fields. Blackwater provides bodyguards for officials of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and escorts military supply convoys along Iraq's dangerous highways. DynCorp of Virginia has been hired to help train Iraq's police and the Iraqi Civil Defense Corps. And, of course, CACI International Inc. provided interrogators inside Abu Ghraib prison.

FOR AMERICAN SOLDIERS and Marines in Iraq, the rapid proliferation of contractors is, at best, a mixed blessing. Some troops I talked to say the contractors' presence frees up their own thinly stretched units to carry out operational activities—including running security patrols, searching for improvised explosive devices, and battling the growing insurgency. "We fight the war, and they do the shit work," one top officer in Baghdad said.

But many troops resent the fact that the private gunmen earn as much as $1,000 per day—ten times the average Marine's salary. And several told me that they find it alarming that so many private gunmen are on the loose in Iraq, unbeholden to military regulations. As the violence intensifies, some contractors have engaged in sustained firefights and even pitched battles with Iraqi insurgents; as many as 50 contractors have been killed in action. "I went to Baghdad last month and couldn't believe how many armed foreign civilians were moving around the streets," I was told by a major in the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Iraq. "It blew me away."

The U.S. military and the contractors work in close proximity. When I flew around northern Iraq two weeks ago on an inspection tour of police academies with Lieutenant General David H. Petraeus—the former 101st Airborne Division commander who is now rebuilding Iraq's security forces—Petraeus's entourage was guarded, in part, by Blackwater's private security men. In Najaf in April, where hundreds of fighters from Moqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army surrounded CPA headquarters, eight Blackwater operators, one Marine, and three Salvadoran soldiers fought side by side from the CPA's rooftop. After ten hours spent fending off sniper fire and rocket-propelled grenades, the men were resupplied by a Blackwater helicopter flown by a veteran Army pilot, who dropped clips of ammunition onto the rooftop. A short time later, the helicopter returned and evacuated a Marine. Some American officials sense commitment and dedication from the contractors. "I looked in their eyes," Brigadier General Mark Kimmitt, the chief U.S. military spokesman, told *The Washington Post* after meeting the American mercenaries. "They knew what they were here for. ... They were absolutely confident."

Sometimes, however, the mercenaries' activities do more harm than good. The uneasy relationship between the troops and the contractors reached its nadir on March 31, when the four Blackwater men were brutally murdered in Falluja, their body parts strung up on a bridge. The previous

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day, the four contractors, all heavily armed but driving unarmored vehicles, had reportedly escorted a food convoy to a nearby Marine base. They spent the night at the base, apparently ate alongside the troops, and then left the next morning for Baghdad, inexplicably taking a shortcut through the resistance stronghold. "We would have told them not do it," said one Marine officer. The officer angrily called the contractors "cowboys" and said they had failed to inform anyone on the base about their plans, a direct violation of military policy. The Marines learned of the ambush and murder by watching CNN.

Some troops I talked to had felt a powerful urge to avenge the contractors' deaths. "They were Americans, and they were brutally murdered. My instinct was, 'We've got to go in,' " said First Sergeant William Skiles, a leader of Echo Company, Second Battalion, First Marine Regiment. But many others were incensed that the mercenaries had forced the military's hand. "My first questions were, 'Who are these people, what were they doing there, and why didn't we know about it?' " said Lieutenant General James T. Conway, commander of the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Falluja. Conway told me he'd had a plan in place to establish military control over Falluja but that intense political pressure to invade the city following the Blackwater killings obliged him to move far more quickly than he had wanted. Conway expressed his reservations to Lieutenant General Ricardo Sanchez, commander of allied forces in Iraq. But he was told that Washington demanded immediate action. Days later, Conway sent two battalions into Falluja, where they killed hundreds of Iraqi combatants and civilians, leveled much of the city, and caused a wave of international opprobrium that ultimately forced Conway to withdraw his troops.

THE AMBUSH KILLINGS in Falluja, and the beheading of a contractor this week, sent shock waves through the mercenary corps in Baghdad. Even so, the brutal attack seems unlikely to dampen the contracting boom. "These guys may be chastened, but nobody's talking about leaving Iraq," I was told by one "security consultant" as he sipped a Carlsberg poolside last week. "For one thing, the money's too damn good." He also pointed out that most of the contractors are the hardest of the hard core—veterans of such elite outfits as the U.S. Special Forces; the Rhodesian Selous Scouts, the former special forces of the Rhodesian white regime; and Executive Outcomes, the now-disbanded South African mercenary army that fought in Sierra Leone and Angola.

These men thrive on the danger of working in war zones. As the security consultant spoke, a contingent of 25 Blackwater operatives seated across the pool passed around a bottle of Jack Daniel's and two bottles of vodka donated by Bushmaster. As if on cue, one Blackwater man pulled out an acoustic guitar, and his two dozen comrades burst into a rockabilly ditty: "Goin' Down to the River with My Dirty Ol' Shotgun." Bushmaster, an empty bottle of Stolichnaya at his feet, grinned and tipped his hat. ■

Gaga over Google.

Bubble Bath

BY CLAY RISEN

IT HAS BEEN barely four years since the dot-com bubble burst, but Google's impending initial public offering (IPO) has investors, analysts, and financial journalists partying like it's 1999. Over the past two weeks, the financial media have praised Google and its thirtysomething founders in a manner unseen since Netscape and its own wunderkind founder went public fewer than ten years ago. The IPO, which is likely to take place within the next few months, "is generating enormous hype," noted *The Wall Street Journal*, "and for once an Internet IPO may actually deserve it." Indeed, thanks to Google, crowed a *Washington Post* editorial, "After some years of dot-bomb gloom, we look forward to a new phase of fun and innovation."

Nor is Google's IPO an isolated incident. Nine tech companies have gone public in the first three months of this year, versus just one during the first quarter of 2003. "It's a good time to go public," says Mark Mahaney, an analyst with American Technology Research. "The Internet capital markets are extremely receptive." Even that may be an understatement. Market analysts say Google's $2.7 billion IPO could balloon to a market capitalization of more than $30 billion, compelling evidence that pent-up demand for hot tech stocks is driving Googlemania.

Problem is, there are serious questions about Google's long-term viability—the kinds of questions that, under normal circumstances, would dramatically dampen excitement over the company's IPO. And it's not just Google: Many of the other tech companies with recent IPOs look suspect upon closer inspection. The fact that journalists and analysts haven't bothered to dwell on these unpleasant realities suggests that, not only are we on the verge of another tech boom, but we're probably on the verge of another tech bubble as well.

TO BE SURE, Google has done extremely well since it emerged six years ago from a grad-student research effort. At the heart of the search engine is a sophisticated algorithm for listing websites in order of their relevance, or the number of times other sites have linked to them. Thanks to its ability to link unobtrusive ads (which appeals to users) with this powerful search method (which appeals to advertisers), the company has been in the black since 2001, with $100 million in 2003 profits and $64 million so far in 2004.

But that success has less to do with the company's superiority over its competitors than with good luck: Google hit its stride at a time when the big guys were looking else-

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where. In 2001, search was seen as a useful but unprofitable aspect of the Web; ironically, thanks to Google, today it is viewed as pivotal to the software sector's future. "The cat is out of the bag," says Scott Kessler, an analyst who covers high-tech firms for Standard & Poor's. Word has it that Microsoft will feature an immensely powerful search engine in the next generation of Windows, due out by 2006. Not only will it incorporate a Web-search algorithm similar to Google's, it will also be able to search a user's desktop, local area network, and e-mail. "Microsoft loves complex software like search," noted Forrester Research analyst George Colony recently. "The company started in the languages business. Taking down Google with better search is in its strike zone."

As a result, Google stands a good chance of becoming not the next Microsoft, but the next Netscape. Like Google, Netscape was a small firm that went public, to great fanfare, largely on the strength of its hold on the browser market. (And, like Google, it was led by an Internet genius whose wizardry initially dispelled questions about his firm's long-term potential.) But, only a few years after Netscape went public, it had been eclipsed by Microsoft, thanks in large part to the latter's ability to tie its browser into its operating system. Today, Netscape is a largely forgotten subsidiary of America Online. And, while Google actually has a viable business model—something Netscape never really developed—the potential for a trouncing by Bill Gates is nonetheless large. As it did with Internet Explorer, Microsoft is likely to embed its browser directly into its Windows software. Combine that ease of access with the fact that the Microsoft browser will be more functional, and it's tough to see why many Windows users would even bother with Google.

Worse, Microsoft is hardly the only competitor poised to eat away at Google's market share. The next generation of search engines, analysts say, will be intensely personalized, allowing users to search within specific geographic regions and returning results filtered through a variety of stored user characteristics. On this front, it is Yahoo!, which, until early this year, had actually used Google to power its search function, that is ahead of the pack. Yahoo! has the advantage of being able to cull demographic data from its millions of subscribers (to e-mail and other services) and match them with advertisers, a kind of personalization that is viewed as the holy grail of Internet marketing.

Even if Google does somehow remain on top of the search-engine market, it will still find itself in a precarious position. Though many analysts expect the search-engine advertising market to expand rapidly, the fact that Google relies on ads for 96 percent of its revenue makes it "a one-trick pony vulnerable to the swings of the market," as *The Toronto Star* noted recently. Google has responded to these concerns by rolling out its own free e-mail service (called Gmail), and insiders expect other services—such as instant messaging—within the year. (Gmail will not only bring in more users, but, by scanning e-mails for key words and then embedding ads linked to those terms, it will create another revenue stream as well.) But simply entering a market does not guarantee success. "Even if the actual service is compelling," says Kessler, "it has to be very special to get people to sign on," given all the other services available.

And there's a final pitfall: Whether Google stays focused on search or moves on to other services may not, in the end, be its decision. In April 2002, a software-development firm named Overture sued Google for violating its patent on a method for ranking search results. Not surprisingly, last year, Yahoo! bought Overture and thus stands to benefit immensely should it win the suit. Such a decision could either force Google to pay an exorbitant licensing fee or allow Overture to set a fee so high that Google has to get out of the search business altogether. "If Overture wins this, [Google's] primary revenue driver is out the window," says Chris Sherman, an editor at *SearchEngineWatch.com*, an online trade publication. While the case is barely out of the discovery phase, the success other companies have had in pursuing similar patent-infringement violations in recent years suggests there's a good chance Overture could prevail.

STILL, IF GOOGLE were just a single, isolated example of investors misjudging the prospects of an upcoming IPO, it wouldn't be much to worry about. Sooner or later, the company's stock price would fall back in line with its potential for earnings growth, and the fallout from that correction would be confined to a relatively small group of overly optimistic investors.

The problem is that the hype surrounding the Google IPO looks symptomatic of a broader phenomenon: a return to the irrational exuberance of the late '90s. A raft of dot-coms are suddenly throwing their hats into the IPO ring. And, while some of them—such as Netflix (the online DVD rental company) and RedEnvelope (an online gift retailer)—are relatively mature companies with proven moneymaking abilities, investors are also starting to throw cash at the kind of unproven firms that defined the '90s bubble. Marchex, for example, an untested 15-month-old online advertising broker, has seen its stock rise 65 percent since its March 30 IPO. Salesforce.com, a firm that manages other companies' sales relationships (and perhaps the second-most anticipated IPO this season), had to postpone an earlier offering because of a Securities and Exchange Commission investigation. And Seven, a software developer, went public recently despite a $12 million annual loss on $6 million in revenue.

Why hasn't the market learned the lessons that seemed so clear after the tech bust early this decade? For one thing, the rapid democratization of the stock market during the '90s continues today. Thanks largely to the continued growth of pension funds and discount brokerages, more Americans have money in the market today than they did at the height of the boom. That means that, even though many first-time investors got burned, a whole new crop of first-time investors has emerged to take their place in the past few years.

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Second, it's not clear that even the investors who did get burned ever got over the exuberance of the late '90s. "Memory can be offset by greed," says Tom Taulli, the manager of the Oceanus Value Fund and an adjunct professor at the University of Southern California. "It's always, 'This time is different; this is a different company.' We get hundreds of e-mails a day from people who say, 'I want to put my life savings in Google.' Have they read the prospectus? Probably not. Could they even read it? I doubt it."

On top of this, the analyst/investment-banking relationship that came in for so much scrutiny during the last few years still hasn't been completely repaired. This, despite reforms that forced a tentative split between investment bankers and equity analysts. As long as IPOs represent big commissions for these firms, it's difficult to see how any analyst working for them can be counted on to assess IPOs objectively.

Finally, the dynamic of institutional investing deserves a share of the blame. Up until the mid-'90s, many large, institutional investors sat out the tech boom, worried—accurately, as it turns out—that the companies whose market valuations were rising so rapidly had little chance of actually turning a profit. But, once a small number of institutional investors got in the tech game—and proceeded to make huge annual returns on tech stocks—it became difficult for more clear-eyed fund managers to resist the pressure. (Particularly since most fund managers are evaluated against their peers.)

This same dynamic seems to be taking hold again, as fund managers vow not to get left behind in the kind of bull market they might have been slow to embrace the last time around. And, this time, funds are much more willing to buy and sell stocks quickly, meaning that they care less about the fundamentals. "Turnover rates are higher than before; they're very fickle on Wall Street," says Taulli. Indeed, fund managers have come around to the idea that momentum investing—that is, buying stocks whose prices are rising, even if they're not inherently valuable, in order to unload them later—is a necessary evil and something they can no longer avoid if they want to retain clients. As investing icon Peter Bernstein, long known as an advocate of conservative, buy-and-hold management, rhetorically asked a group of institutional money managers last year, "What if moving around more frequently is now a necessity rather than a matter of choice?"

In an ideal, rational world, all the concerns about Google and the other companies going public would frame the discussion over their IPOs. But, rather than push us closer to that world, the same forces behind the recent dot-com implosion are pushing us once again toward a return to the heady, antediluvian days of the late '90s. As one tech consultant wrote recently, "Google's IPO is expected to signal the horn's blast trumpeting the beginning of the next IPO land rush for tech companies everywhere." Why does everyone think that's a good thing? ■

The economic lessons of Clinton.

Rubinomics Redux

JONATHAN CHAIT VERSUS ROBERT J. SAMUELSON

One of the more bizarre rhetorical strategies employed by economic conservatives in recent years has been to tar their opponents as advocates of "Rubinomics." It's bizarre, first, because, if you want to discredit your adversaries by identifying them with a person, you wouldn't usually choose the Treasury secretary who presided over the longest expansion in U.S. history. The second reason it's bizarre is that the specific notion conservatives wish to discredit—that large and sustained budget deficits harm the economy—is by no means peculiar to Robert Rubin. Nonetheless, a fierce anti-Rubin revisionism has emerged on the right, and the debate over Rubin is understood by both sides to be, in part, a proxy debate over the economic policies of George W. Bush.

In a recent 9,000-word cover story in this magazine (see "What the Boom Forgot," May 3), Robert J. Samuelson gives expression—and, to some extent, lends The New Republic's imprimatur—to this anti-Rubin (which is to say, anti-anti-deficit) revisionism. Samuelson is not a habitual repeater of Republican talking points, and, on the surface, his essay appears more credible than most anti-Clinton or pro-Bush pseudo-economic screeds. But he employs misleading arguments and tries to pass off his own ideological preferences as settled fact, and ultimately his essay is no more convincing than GOP spin.

To the extent that Rubin introduced a new idea, it was that deficit-reduction, at least under certain conditions (such as those when Clinton took office) can help spark short-term economic growth. This idea is worth debating. Alas, Samuelson does not address it. Instead, he takes issue with the broader notion that deficits harm the economy over the long run. Not only did Rubin not invent that idea, it's not even controversial among economists. In other words, while Samuelson purports to be debunking Rubinomics, his real quarrel is with economics.

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THE HEART OF Samuelson's argument is a series of contrasts between what he labels "myth" and "reality." One "myth" is that "[b]udget deficits raise interest rates." "Reality," Samuelson writes, is that "[d]eficits are only one of many influences on interest rates, and at present a minor one." This is baffling, because the two statements do not contradict each other: Higher deficits put upward pressure on long-term interest rates, but they're not the only factor. It's as if Samuelson wrote, "Myth: Eating more food makes you gain weight. Reality: Food consumption is only one factor in weight gain."

The relationship between deficits and long-term interest rates is a truism among economists. As former Harvard economist and current Bush Council of Economic Advisers Chairman Greg Mankiw observed in a textbook he wrote in 1997, "When the government reduces national saving by running a budget deficit, the interest rate rises, and investment falls." The reason is simple. Interest rates are the price of borrowing money. There's a finite amount of money to be borrowed. When the government enters the market looking to borrow money at any price—which is what happens when it runs a deficit—then there's less money available for everybody else to borrow. The supply drops, and therefore the price rises.

To be sure, the relationship between deficits and interest rates is not always apparent, because there are a number of factors that affect interest rates in contradictory ways and all operate at once. During an economic boom, for instance, deficits will tend to fall, which puts downward pressure on interest rates. But booms also cause the Federal Reserve to hike overnight interest rates, which cause long-term rates to rise.

Samuelson cites rising rates during the '90s (when deficits fell) and falling rates since 2001 (when deficits skyrocketed) to show that there's no link between the two. But this doesn't show that deficits don't affect interest rates. It only shows that other factors can sometimes have a larger effect. If we hadn't reduced the deficit during the '90s, long-term interest rates would have been higher than they were. Return for a moment to the food/weight analogy. Suppose you started consuming far more calories at the same time you began training for a marathon and, as a result, lost weight. Would this prove that the relationship between calories and weight is a myth? Of course not.

In one breath, Samuelson acknowledges this logic and then dismisses it. "All other things being equal, interest rates should rise [if deficits rise]," he asserts. "But other things are rarely equal, and actual interest rates reflect many forces." As a matter of fact, other things are *never* equal. That's not the point. Economists use that phrase because, in a world with myriad factors, it's the only way to think about the effects of a single one. To reject that analysis on the grounds that "other things are rarely equal" is to reject all economic analysis—indeed, all social science.

Samuelson's next "myth" is that "[b]ig budget deficits depress private investment and thereby hurt future wages and living standards." This "myth," unfortunately for Samuelson, is another economic truism. Deficits soak up private capital that could be used for productive investment and divert it into government debt.

Samuelson doesn't refute this logic. He simply points to other effects that deficits have and other factors that affect investment. For instance, he argues, "It's not just how much a country invests, but how well." OK, sure. But how well a country invests is independent of how much it invests. Again, there may be several factors affecting private investment and future income, but focusing on those other factors doesn't change the fact that deficits are one of them.

Deficits also depress future incomes in a more straightforward way: The more debt we bequeath to future taxpayers, the more taxes they'll have to spend paying off interest on our debt. Samuelson doesn't even mention this—odd, given that, in other contexts, the burden of debt on future generations is a major theme of his. In one column on Medicare last December, he wrote (accurately), "Who's going to pay? Well, tomorrow's workers." Another earlier this year, on the prescription-drug benefit, was titled "OUR KIDS WILL PAY THE BILL."

WHY WOULD SAMUELSON fixate on the evils of higher debt in some contexts while dismissing them in others? His inconsistency is best understood as a product of his particular brand of small-government conservatism. Samuelson's core belief is that we must reduce Medicare and Social Security payments. Thus his criticism of Rubin, who recommended in the late '90s—while liberals and conservatives clamored to divide up newfound budget surpluses for spending or tax cuts—that the surpluses should be reserved to pay down the national debt. The Clinton administration sold this frugal policy by arguing that the less debt we leave to future taxpayers, the easier time they'll have handling deficits in Social Security. Samuelson, in his review, decries President Clinton's move as "a plug for the status quo: preserving all future benefits of Social Security and Medicare."

But Samuelson not only dismisses the benefits of deficit-reduction, he denies that Clinton's policies enabled deficit-reduction in the first place. According to Samuelson, another "myth" is that "fiscal responsibility ... led to budget surpluses in the late 1990s." Reality, he tells us, is that "the economic boom and the end of the cold war were the basic causes of the surpluses." To be sure, there's a germ of a point here—external factors had a lot to do with the improving budget picture under Clinton, as well as with the subsequent deterioration under Bush. But Samuelson stretches that point beyond all plausibility.

First, Samuelson treats the boom as a pure windfall. But respectable Democratic economists, such as former Clinton Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, make a plausible case that the boom came in large part *because* of the deficit-reduction that preceded it. Yes, productive new technologies emerged during the '90s. If we were still running 1980s-

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scale deficits when they emerged, though, much of the investment capital that funded those technologies would have instead gone into financing government debt. To some extent, deficit-reduction begat more investment, which begat more productivity, which begat stronger growth, which begat even lower deficits. Now, it's impossible to tell whether deficit-reduction played a major role or a minor role in producing that virtuous cycle. But assigning fiscal responsibility *zero* role in the boom simply strains credulity.

Even if we assume that deficit-reduction had absolutely nothing to do with the '90s boom, however, Samuelson still underplays the role that good policy—as opposed to lucky external factors—played in reducing the deficit. He quantifies the fiscal benefits of the boom and lower post-cold-war defense costs, pointing out that they were very large. Which they were. But, astonishingly, he doesn't compare those numbers with the savings brought about by deficit-reduction. In fact, he doesn't bring up those savings at all.

Here's a fair side-by-side comparison. In 2000, non-defense-related savings from Clinton's 1993 budget accounted for 2.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). Lower defense spending accounted for 2.2 percent, and higher revenue from the boom another 3 percent. The 1990 deficit-reduction deal—the tax hike and budget cuts passed by the first President Bush, which in many ways presaged Clinton's own approach—accounted for another 1.8 percent of GDP. Samuelson asserts that "good luck, more than good policy, produced the surpluses." Yet *even by Samuelson's own definition*, "good luck" accounted for not much more (5.2 percent of GDP) than good policy (4.2 percent of GDP). It's hard to think of any reason why he omitted these numbers except that doing so would have undercut his argument.

On top of all that, Samuelson piles on one more misleading omission. He assumes the surpluses that appeared in the late '90s would have appeared no matter who held office at the time. But only Clinton's insistence on reserving the surpluses for deficit-reduction—the very insistence Samuelson so derides—kept the surpluses from quickly being carved up for spending and tax cuts. That is to say, even if we grant all of Samuelson's other arguments and assume that fiscal responsibility had nothing whatsoever to do with the surpluses at the end of his term, Clinton still deserves credit for using that money to pay down the national debt, rather than spending it. The $236 billion devoted to paying down the debt in 2000 is still around $236 billion more than it would have been if a less frugal president had held office.

THE ESSENTIAL FLAW in Samuelson's argument can be seen in his final "myth." After denying that "[t]he central budget problem is eliminating stubborn budget deficits," he instructs us that "[t]he true problem is federal spending, driven by higher retirement benefits for aging baby-boomers." Samuelson is conflating the problem with his preferred solution. By any objective standard, the true problem is that the government is on course to spend far more than it takes in, and rising costs in Medicare and Social Security are a part of the problem. We could solve this problem with higher revenue. Alternatively, as Samuelson hopes, we could do it through benefit cuts. Or we could do some combination. To state authoritatively that the "true problem" is high spending is no more valid than asserting that the true problem is low revenue.

Samuelson occasionally falls into the habit of burying his own preferences behind authoritative-sounding empirical statements about the economy. Thus, he is unmoved by the effects of deficits caused by tax cuts but panic-stricken about the effects of deficits brought about by growing Social Security and Medicare costs. In the same TNR essay dismissing the effects of deficits, he warns that, as a result of the entitlement crisis, "interest rates might rise, choking off investment and promoting stagnation. Worse, huge deficits could trigger a financial crisis." This might be intellectually consistent if the future entitlement deficits were bigger than the tax-cut deficits. But they're not. The present value of deficits in the Social Security and Medicare trust funds combined over the next 75 years amounts to 2.2 percent of GDP. The present value of the revenue loss caused by Bush's tax cuts over the same period also equals 2.2 percent. If we repeal the Bush tax cuts, we could, if we wanted to, solve the Medicare and Social Security trust-fund deficits. That doesn't mean we *should* do that, and Samuelson could argue that cutting benefits makes the most sense (as he has in other contexts). But his TNR essay circumvents that argument altogether.

Samuelson's gambit is best understood in the context of recent fiscal debates. His desire to starve entitlement programs no doubt helped drive his support for the Bush tax cut in 2001. "I think Bush is correct on the central issue of government's size," he wrote. He also accused this magazine and other critics of the tax cut of throwing a "tantrum." When critics questioned Bush's claim that he could easily pay for his tax cut, new spending on the military, and prescription drugs—and still pay off the national debt—Samuelson replied that "the critics' case is wildly overstated." As we now know, the critics' case was wildly *understated*. We figured Bush wouldn't really pay off the debt, we suspected he might bring deficits, but nobody predicted half a trillion dollars' worth of red ink per year.

Rather than directly concede error, Samuelson simply waves the point away. "It's true that Bush's tax cuts have created the prospect of endless deficits," he conceded in a column last year. "But this is not the real issue; the real issue is future government spending." This is a fairly galling argument. (Try telling your spouse, "OK, maybe borrowing $50,000 to buy that sports car *was* a bad idea, but the real issue is all the money we're spending on that retirement community for your mother.") But, since it's getting harder and harder to defend Bush's fiscal policies, perhaps the only remaining tactic is to change the subject. Samuelson tries to persuade TNR's readers that Clinton's economic policy didn't work—and, by implication, cannot work in the future. But that isn't his real objection. His real objection is that he doesn't want it to work.

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ROBERT J. SAMUELSON RESPONDS:

FOR DECADES, ECONOMIC ideas have been merchandized for political purposes—by economists who have peddled their pet theories as a way of gaining public prominence or political appointment and by politicians who have advertised economic doctrines as solutions to the nation's social problems. In the 1960s, there was "Keynesianism," the notion that manipulation of budget deficits and surpluses could eliminate recessions. "Monetarism," which emerged in the late '70s, promised that slavish control of the money supply could eradicate inflation and stabilize the economy. In the '80s, "supply-side economics" contended that low marginal tax rates—the tax on the last dollar of income—could dramatically increase economic growth. Each of these doctrines contained some truth, but each was exaggerated to enhance its political appeal. The inevitable result was disillusion, because none could live up to its billing.

The obsession with government budget deficits is the latest of these simplistic fads. According to fashionable theory, low deficits (or better, surpluses) promote strong, sustained economic growth through, among other things, low interest rates that stimulate investment. Conversely, large deficits are supposed to discourage economic growth through, among other things, high interest rates. But, in the real world, the economy doesn't respond to deficits or surpluses as the theory implies, and formulating budget policy requires answering other questions beyond whether there's a surplus or a deficit. How high should government spending and taxes go? What programs are in the national interest—and why? Who deserves help—and why?

I am in an awkward position. In general, I have favored balanced budgets—when the country is not in or near a recession or fighting a major war—as a crude political discipline. If extra government spending is worth having, it should be worth paying for with higher taxes. I've called this view "the folk wisdom," and it prevailed until the '60s, when Keynesian economists dismissed it as old-fashioned. But, although I dislike deficits, I think their adverse economic effects have been (so far) exaggerated. Similarly, I think the benefits of surpluses have been overstated.

One point of my TNR review, which covered former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin's memoir and four other books, was to question the single-minded focus on budget deficits. The review was not a personal attack on Rubin. Indeed, it praised his role in addressing the Asian financial crisis of 1997–'98, and his performance there will (I think) deservedly secure his reputation. But, to the extent that Rubin has popularized the obsession with budget deficits, he is a fair target for criticism. If Rubin were alone in holding these views, it wouldn't matter much. But the truth is that there are many in both parties—including many economists—who have bought into this theory.

Jonathan Chait has taken strident exception to my analysis. I could answer his critique point for point, but that would be tedious and, for all but dedicated economic policy wonks, fairly opaque. The better course, I think, is to respond to Chait's three broad arguments: that Clinton's "deficit-reduction" program primed the '90s recovery; that Clinton's policies were decisive in restoring budget surpluses; and that a return to his policies will solve the nation's future budget problems. Each is exaggerated.

First, declining budget deficits didn't cause the economic expansion of the '90s. If Chait were correct, Clinton and Rubin would be responsible for the '90s boom—and the subsequent bust. Happily for them, Chait is wrong. Two economic surprises propelled the prolonged expansion: Inflation was lower than expected, and productivity growth was higher than expected. As a result, optimism increased, and people spent more because their "real" (inflation-adjusted) wages and salaries rose. Higher profits contributed to an improving stock market and greater business investment. Dampened inflation meant the Federal Reserve didn't have to raise interest rates to prevent an "overheating" economy from triggering a wage-price spiral. But diminishing budget deficits didn't cause either lower inflation or higher productivity.

Inflationary expectations had gradually subsided since the early '80s because the Federal Reserve—first under Paul Volcker and then under Alan Greenspan—had indicated that it would no longer tolerate high and rising inflation through easy-money policies. By the early '90s, other factors may also have helped: Intensified competition from imports limited companies' ability to raise prices (greater domestic competition had a similar effect), new computer technologies held down costs, and the expansion of "managed care" temporarily restrained health costs. At the same time, productivity—the measure of how efficiently workers work and companies use their machinery, factories, et cetera—increased. But that increase was mainly a function of better management and technology. There was no short-run connection with lower budget deficits. Consider: From 1995 to 2000, as the budget swung from deficit to surplus, productivity growth averaged 2.6 percent annually. From 2000 to 2003, the budget returned to big deficits, but productivity growth averaged 3.9 percent.

As for the impact of deficits on interest rates, Chait says I'm confused and inconsistent. Not so. All I've said is that, in the past, the effects of deficits have been modest and usually overwhelmed by other factors: inflation, the state of the economy, and Federal Reserve policy. Had inflation jumped in the early '90s, for example, interest rates would also have jumped—regardless of the budget deficit. After all, investors won't buy bonds at 6 percent if inflation is 7 percent—they'd be losing money.

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Second, President Clinton's budget policies didn't create the surpluses of the late '90s—the economic boom and the end of the cold war did. When Clinton took office early in 1993, the economy was still suffering from the 1990–'91 recession, and such slumps automatically shift the budget toward deficits. Tax revenue weakens because wages, salaries, and profits weaken. Government spending grows for unemployment benefits, food stamps, and other "safety net" programs. In fiscal year 1992—George H.W. Bush's last year—the budget deficit was $290 billion, or 4.7 percent of GDP. By 1995—when Clinton's budget plan had taken effect—the deficit had dropped to $164 billion, or 2.2 percent of GDP. About one-third of the decline reflected the recovering economy, according to estimates by the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Clinton's higher taxes and spending restraint could be credited with the rest. But a big part of the drop in the deficit was lower post-cold-war defense spending, which declined from 4.8 percent of GDP in 1992 to 3.7 percent in 1995.

Almost no one anticipated the subsequent surpluses in early 1995. Both the Clinton administration and the CBO projected continuing deficits. Nor did Clinton advocate balancing the budget. What happened? The economic boom caused tax revenue to surge. In 1995, federal tax revenue was 18.5 percent of GDP. By 2000, it was 20.9 percent of GDP, the highest since 1944, even though Congress had actually cut taxes in 1997. Wages and salaries increased. Profits rose. Bonuses proliferated. Capital gains (stock profits, mostly) exploded. At 20.9 percent of GDP, taxes were $229 billion higher than they would have been at 18.5 percent of GDP. The actual surplus in 2000 was $236 billion. (Once the boom ended, this flood tide of revenue receded.) Defense spending also continued to decline, the boom reduced "safety net" outlays, and interest payments dropped.

Finally, the major budget problem is not the deficit, but federal spending—dominated by spending for retirement programs. The reason is this: Government spending must be financed either by taxes or borrowing (deficits). Too much of either could hurt the economy. Just because deficits haven't done much harm in the past doesn't mean they might not in the future. The same is true of much higher taxes. You don't have to be a "supply-side" zealot (I'm not) to think that high taxes can discourage work, investment, or risk-taking. Even if high taxes weren't an economic danger, we might not want to overtax younger and poorer workers to subsidize older and richer retirees.

Chait's statement that, "[i]f we repeal the Bush tax cuts, we could, if we wanted to, solve the Medicare and Social Security trust-fund deficits" is—over any relevant time horizon—rhetorical make-believe. Here is the basic arithmetic. In 2003, the federal government spent about 20 percent of GDP. Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid (which covers some nursing-home care) accounted for 8 percent of GDP, or about 40 percent of federal spending. Under plausible assumptions, the CBO projects that Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid will cost 14 percent of GDP in 2030. Suppose the budget were now balanced at 20 percent of GDP. That would put taxes near historic highs and would equal levels achieved in the boom-affected years of 1998 and 1999. Still, covering all the projected retirement spending—assuming all other federal spending remains the same as a share of GDP—would require a tax increase equal to 6 percent of GDP. That would be almost a one-third tax increase; in today's dollars, it's about $660 billion *annually*. That dwarfs Bush's tax cuts.

You can fiddle with assumptions, but the point remains: Unless we curb retirement benefits, future pressures to cut other spending or raise taxes will be enormous. It's true that, if we try to deny the pressures by borrowing, the ever-larger deficits will ultimately become unsustainable. Still, the underlying problem is the trajectory of spending. I am not a "small-government conservative" (Chait's label) in the sense that I think government can be made smaller. Given the pressures of aging, it must get bigger. But I have consistently advocated eliminating less-needed programs (examples: farm subsidies, Amtrak) and trimming retirement benefits (raising eligibility ages, making benefits more income-related) to prevent government's growth from becoming burdensome. Future taxes will have to go up. The important question is: How much? The Bush administration's deficits were justifiable as stimulus for a weak economy. But they should not be perpetuated. I have never said otherwise.

In an era when economic theories are routinely marketed for political advantage, I have thought it part of the job of journalists to punch through self-serving myths and convenient delusions. I have never said that deficits don't matter; what I have said is that they don't matter as much as many supposed authorities assert. It's great politics to claim you have a simple formula that will automatically deliver economic success. It is rarely that simple. Focusing relentlessly on deficits is mostly a form of escapism. It justifies skipping over the contentious questions of retirement spending and the messy process—including proper government incentives—that actually leads to healthy economic growth.

Because the attack on me is so uncompromising, let me end on a personal note. The notion that I have formulated my views mainly to discredit Robert Rubin is preposterous and demonstrably false. My views on deficits and retirement programs have been aired in many places for many years: in columns dating back to the early '80s; in my 1995 book, *The Good Life and Its Discontents* (see chapters 10 and 14); in a talk I gave in 1996 at the University of Virginia that was published in a collection by the Miller Center (*The Budget Deficit and the National Debt*). Of course, my views have evolved; but they have long emphasized the need to curb retirement spending and have long disputed the central economic importance of budget deficits. Rubin was a good Treasury secretary. I said that in my review and elsewhere. But he's not infallible. Chait's excited defense of indefensible simplicities does not make them any more defensible or less simplistic. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

European Longings

ESTHER GORINTIN, POLISH-born, lives in Paris, where she has spent most of her life as a dental assistant. At the age of eighty-five she began acting in films, and now, five years later, she appears in **SINCE OTAR LEFT**. Heaven only knows what fine performances we have missed while she was telling dental patients to "open wider, please." In her latest film, white-haired and stoop-shouldered yet sturdy, she plays a grandmother of quiet obstinacy and tacit wisdom, and Gorintin does the role with the economy of an actress who has had much more experience than hers.

SINCE OTAR LEFT
(Zeitgeist)

BULGARIAN LOVERS
(TLA)

The place is Tbilisi in post-Soviet Georgia. Eka, the grandmother, a woman of some cultivation who is fluent in French and stubborn in her politics, lives with Marina (Nino Khomasuridze), her daughter, and Marina's daughter, Ada (Dinara Droukarova). Marina has a job, Ada is a student, Eka does a good deal to keep their modest, pleasant household in shape. But the gem of Eka's life is not there—her son, Otar, a doctor, who for unspecified reasons has gone to Paris and has found jobs as a construction worker. The three women are unified but distinct. Eka pines for Otar's letters and phone calls. Marina, the widow of a soldier killed in Afghanistan, is more or less accepting of her life as it is. Ada, who loves the other two more deeply than she cares to express, is discontent—with herself and her prospects.

While Eka is away at their small country place, word comes to Marina that Otar has been killed in an accident. She and her daughter resolve to hide the news from Eka, using false messages and forged letters from Otar. (Here the story resembles Károly Makk's *Love*, in which a young woman keeps her husband's fate from his ill mother.) At last Eka decides to visit Otar in Paris. She sells things of theirs to buy tickets for all three of them: Marina and Ada go along to be with her when she learns the truth. Eka finds it out on her own, so to speak, and the effect of that discovery is quite unlike what the younger women expected. One further unforeseen effect: Eka's response helps Ada to make a new choice.

The last minutes of the film are exhilarating, but its real triumph is in everything that precedes the ending—the relatively simple lives of the three women up to that point. The film keeps us interested in the texture of its sheer dailiness. All three actresses are first rate—Eka, nothing like a greeting-card grandma, carefully administering love; Marina converting her bitterness into a means of meeting the minutes of the day; Ada managing to be both highly private and durably affectionate.

Much of the credit for this quality must go to the director, Julie Bertucelli, who co-wrote the screenplay with several collaborators. Now in her thirties, the daughter of a director, Jean-Louis Bertucelli, she has worked with Bertrand Tavernier and Krzysztof Kieslowski, no mean exemplars of prime technique committed to human understanding. Bertucelli induces us to live in that apartment with her three women. She has kept the film in a palette of muted colors, almost suggesting black and white, as if to emphasize that these lives are interesting as lived, not as dramatic events. Further, she sometimes composes shots in especially revealing ways. Near the end, for instance, the three women are at the Paris airport en route home and are having a conversation of great importance to them. The camera is somewhat above and slightly away from them while the airport crowds pour around them, yet their three voices are close to us. Here are three women trying to clarify their futures in the middle of the world's whirl.

We can look forward, I'm sure, to more Bertucelli. And more, I certainly hope, of Gorintin.

Novelty is getting harder to find in film subjects. Homosexuality? Mainstream stuff by now, almost as common as heterosexuality, no longer to be judged by its daring but by general criteria. The amusement of gay men through the exchange of available youths? Certainly not novel since *The Boys in the Band* of 1970. Every continent has subsequently made contributions on this theme. What to do for novelty, then? Well, how about a clique of wealthy gay men, this time in Madrid, who specialize in Bulgarian young men? Bulgarians in Spain! At least it's a change.

The result could have been more than just another novelty. Eloy de la Iglesia, who directed **BULGARIAN LOVERS**, has a light and witty touch, reminiscent of his countryman Pedro Almodóvar. He uses film narration, both the dialogue and the flight of images, much as a skilled light comedian might perform, offhandedly emphasizing one point or another, occasionally summoning an irresistible lower tone to show that he has heart. But he needed a better screenplay.

Iglesia, who had his film training in Paris and is now in his sixties, drew his script from a novel by Eduardo Mendicutti, apparently intending to show how current economic and political conditions in Europe affect the world of homosexual epicures. Daniel, an affluent business consultant of about forty, has a circle of friends in Madrid who live in a cream-smooth world of chic clubs and cafés and gyms, call one another "girl," and constantly compare notes and recommendations about youths. Madrid apparently has had an influx of young Bulgarians, eager to make their way in the world and open to offers, and Daniel begins an affair with one of them, Kyril, attractive and cool. Kyril tells Daniel early on that he has a "wife," his fiancée really, who knows about Daniel. This does not

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impede either of the men: in the course of time Daniel even attends Kyril's wedding in Sofia. Some undercover shady doings of Kyril and friends bother Daniel more than the marriage does, but eventually the affair concludes.

The trouble with the story is that there is no tug in it. Daniel's relationship with Kyril never goes any deeper than the infatuation of an older man with a younger (male or female) paramour. Iglesia, if he is emotionally capable of it, could have made a drama, even a comedy, about a man who begins an affair with nothing more than bed in mind and finds that he has enslaved his being. But Iglesia never makes us feel that Daniel, decent though he is, is anything more than a sexual adventurer who has had bad luck this time. ■

Sunil Khilnani

Nehru's Faith

India's contribution to liberalism.

I.

"RELIGION," NEHRU WROTE to Gandhi in 1933, "is not familiar ground for me, and as I have grown older, I have definitely drifted away from it. I have something else in its place, something older than just intellect and reason, which gives me strength and hope. Apart from this indefinable and indefinite urge, which may have just a tinge of religion in it and yet is wholly different from it, I have grown entirely to rely on the workings of the mind. Perhaps they are weak supports to rely upon, but, search as I will," Nehru concluded, "I can see no better ones." But what was it, exactly, that gave Nehru—a man whose political career spanned a long history of expectation, achievement, and disappointment, and took in the highest and lowest points of India's twentieth-century history—"strength and hope"? What were the "workings of the mind" upon which he grew to rely, on which he rested his faith?

By speaking of Nehru's faith, my intentions are not purely historical. I wish to recover faith's primary meaning: trust or confidence, unshakeable belief or conviction—meanings that do not necessarily imply a strictly religious sense. It is crucial to do this, at a moment when our ideas of faith are in danger of becoming unnecessarily restricted. When religion is being held up as the unique source of a sustaining faith, we need to remind ourselves that there are other firm foundations upon which we can build moral projects, in both private and public life. If secularism has multiple meanings, so, too, does faith. In the recent history of the subcontinent, certainly, there is perhaps no better practical instance of the effort to find a non-religious bedrock for morality than the faith of Jawaharlal Nehru.

Unusually for a politician, Nehru was a man of deeply held moral convictions: he believed in the moral life not just as sustaining private life, but also as necessary for the living of any kind of political life. Yet he never placed his faith in religion. He wrote in his *Autobiography* that "organized religion" filled him "with horror ... almost always it seemed to stand for a blind belief and reaction, dogma and bigotry, superstition and exploitation." And yet he wrote in prison at Ahmadnagar Fort in 1945 that "some kind of ethical approach to life has a strong appeal for me." That ethical approach he discovered in the disciplined exercise of his mind. Reason was not merely an instrument by which to accomplish practical goals: through reasoning, both moral ends and practical goals were determined, and by reasoning for oneself one took responsibility for one's commitments and beliefs. This, I think, captures the meaning of Nehru's faith: reason, and the processes of reasoning,

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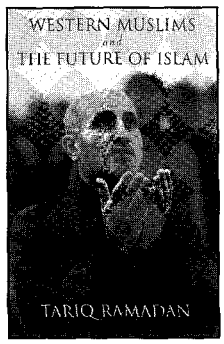

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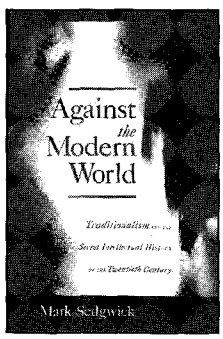

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are the greatest resources we have through which to create and to sustain our moral imagination. Indeed, Nehru's overriding importance at this tense point in India's great democratic experiment rests not so much in his obvious historical significance for India's national story, but rather in his intellectual and political understanding; in his struggle, not always successful, to base public life on a reasoned morality.

It has lately become fashionable to attack reason. In many intellectual circles, reason is portrayed as an ill effect of the Enlightenment, of the imperium of Western theories and assumptions, an imperium oblivious to cultural differences and diversities. The rise of postmodernism and the expanding claims of contemporary religion are by no means directly connected, but they also are not entirely unlinked. At a time when our universities are being encouraged to produce postgraduates with degrees in astrology and all ideas are increasingly deemed to be merely a series of interpretations based upon the realities of power, it may seem misplaced to offer a defense of reason. The political landscape today seems to have become the territory of the non-rational and the post-rational, strewn with strident new claims to selfhood—couched in terms of identity and religion, of nation, tribe, and culture—all ready to use violence to assert their desires. Reason seems to have been utterly disarmed.

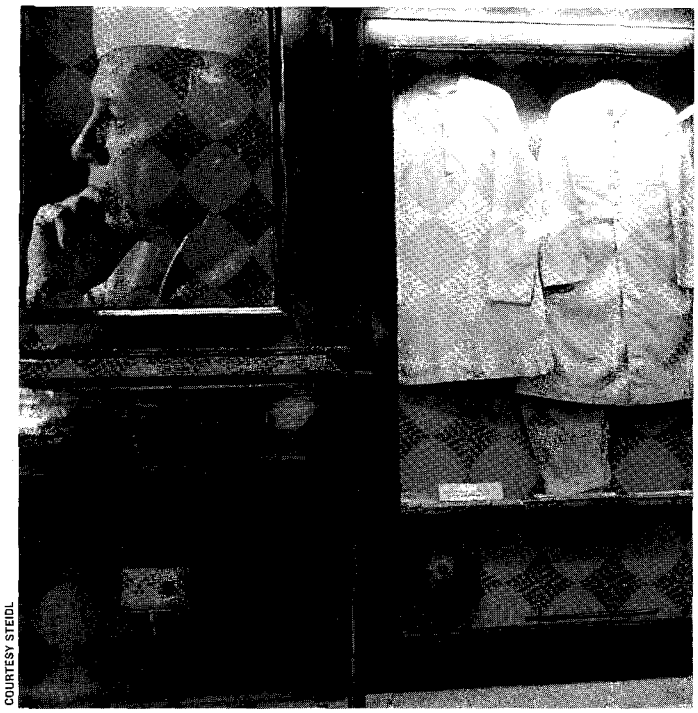
So we need to find ways to re-assert a confidence in reason. This will mean first and necessarily having to see reason in a more complex light, not as a smiling rationalism or a strong belief in human perfectibility. "Perfection," Nehru wrote, "is beyond us for it means the end, and we are always journeying, trying to approach something that is ever receding. And in each one of us are many different human beings with their inconsistencies and contradictions, each pulling in a different direction." It is precisely because of this—our human contrariness—that we need a capacity like reason to find a way out of the dark, individually and collectively. A proper faith in reason is owed not to a sense of the simplicity of the human mind and its motivating passions, but to a deep regard for its complexities and its mysteries.

Nehru's own understanding of reason was complicated and subtle, more so than is recognized by his admirers and his critics; and it was forged in circumstances that resonate with our own, in times when reason seemed in retreat—in the 1930s and 1940s, when fascism was ravaging Europe and religious chauvinism was splintering India. Self-proclaimed Nehruvians, who have tried to subsume his thinking under such phrases as "the scientific temper," and similarly those who criticize Nehru for what they have called his "rational monism," miss what is truly distinctive about his thinking. Nehru's faith in reason did not lead him to an easy belief that history was on the side of reason: he was without the rationalist's faith that reason's historical triumph was guaranteed. He saw it, instead, as a fragile faculty; and in relation to a life, it represented the attempt to hold within a single mind the range of considerations on how to live.

In recent years in India, the works of such figures as Mohandas Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel, Subhas Chandra Bose, and Rabindranath Tagore have all benefited from more nuanced interpretations of each man's life and thought. Nehru, by contrast, has been subjected to simplifications that border on caricature, portrayed as a mouthpiece for a one-dimensional view of science and for a vacuous universalism. This actually says more about our own hopes and fears than it does about the period and the man that it claims to illuminate: almost as if it is a way of helping us deal with our disappointments and frustrations over what India might be.

Nehru certainly recognized the instrumental power of reason. In its two most materially powerful forms—scientific reason (the project of trying to bend the natural world to human purposes) and social reason (the project of trying to use human institutions, above all the state, to remake society)—reason was, for Nehru, a tool for altering the natural and human worlds, for good or for ill. Yet this instrumental aspect did not exhaust the resources of reason. Reason could be used to sustain raw power, but it could also be used as a way of creating an ethics, of sustaining a moral imagination. He also recognized that reason was not a Western import—that there was a long and refined Indian history of reasoned argument about moral life and moral action. It was Nehru's deep conviction that moral beliefs had to be argued for, and held up rationally to the harsh light of history and experience. They could not be taken for granted, or accepted merely because they were laid down in religious edicts and texts or sanctioned by ancient traditions. And it was precisely because morality was accessible to reason that it was possible to bring others over to one's beliefs—by hearing and acknowledging opposing views, by offering one's interlocutors reasons to believe, by persuading them.

Nehru lived, with varying degrees of nearness and distance, through some of the bleakest days of the bleak twentieth century. All the century's slaughter inevitably shadowed his sense of what was humanly possible. Both Tagore and Gandhi ended their lives with pessimistic or fatalistic views about the human future. Tagore, in his late essay "The



COURTESY STEIDL

DAYANITA SINGH, *A room in Nehru's house, Allahabad*, 2000

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Crisis in Civilization," gave elegant expression to his pessimism, while Gandhi's fatalism was visible in his growing distance, in the last years of his life, from the political sphere and his withdrawal into a realm of private moral and spiritual experimentation.

But Nehru's destiny was quite different: he was hurled into the ruckus of politics. Put in command of a vast new state, he had to act—during and after Partition—in circumstances in which violence and hatred had burst all known bounds and reason had fled the scene. What kept him going was a conviction that even in the darkest times, intellectual inquiry—"the workings of the mind"—could not be given up: the true failure of faith, the real moral collapse, would be to give up one's faith in reason. And so Nehru reasoned his way through the great gloom.

If it is unusual to consider political leaders in this way, it is perhaps because we have become too accustomed to thinking of them as professionals pursuing a career. We have come to assume that politicians are effective to the extent that they are single-minded in the pursuit of power, and adept at criticizing others, never themselves. But surely anyone who chooses the political life has a moral and intellectual responsibility to be self-critical, to examine his or her own commitments coldly and lucidly. Nehru's political career—and he was certainly the most complex politician, I mean the most complex person wholly devoted to politics, that India has ever produced—is significant for having exemplified the belief that morality must have a place in political life. In the absence of such a perspective, Nehru's career makes little sense: what makes him interesting as a politician, what sets him apart, is his constant probing of how to combine morality with politics.

If Nehru was unusual as a politician in the depth of his moral commitments, it is necessary to see also how he was entirely ordinary, in ways that Gandhi was not. Gandhi was unique: he developed extraordinary qualities of character, intensities of self-denial that seem almost freakish. But Nehru was not like that: he was in a profound way like any one of us—teeming with human appetites, often bewildered by life's choices, self-doubting, indecisive, short-tempered, needy, sometimes downcast. Unlike Gandhi, he set himself no superhuman moral feats. Like Gandhi, he possessed a remarkable steadfastness of faith. Yet it was distinctly his own faith: Nehru tried to use to the utmost the great capacity that we all possess, the capacity to reason.

II.

From the late nineteenth century onward, all Indian thinkers and political figures faced a fundamental problem: how to discover or to devise coherent shared norms and values that could hold all Indians together under modern conditions and could define a public sphere for Indians. This deep theme of India's intellectual and political history has too often been subsumed under the story of Indian nationalism, as the search for what could unite the diversity of India in a common identity. And as the question to which nationalism was a response is revisiting Indian society and politics with a new and dangerous force, we need to broaden our forms of address toward it, and to recover this other, more encompassing history, to reconstruct its shape. For at its core lies the fundamental question of political life, anywhere and anytime: how can we create and sustain a moral public life?

What we find in Tagore, in Gandhi, and in Nehru, in their self-criticisms as well as in their debates, is a search for a modern morality. They sought principles and practices through which Indians could engage in the public political life to which they were now, in the form of their new state, necessarily condemned and committed. Tagore, Gandhi, Nehru: each represents an important moment in the creation of a tradition of public reason—the creation of an intellectual space that allowed moral principles, and the political choices that moral principles entail, to be debated, revised, decided upon. In their finest moments, the arguments and the ideas that were generated by these extraordinary figures exceeded the bounds of nationalism or nationalist thought: their intellectual ambitions were much greater than those who think merely in terms of a narrow Indian identity, however defined. They asked large questions and demanded ambitious answers. When thinking about moral questions, they did not ask, "What should an Indian do?" or "What should a Hindu or a Muslim do?" Instead they asked, "What should a moral being do?" And alongside this powerful universalist impulse, they were also compelled to retain a vivid sense of the constraints that they and their compatriots faced: the presence of a colonial state, and also the pervasive grip of tradition. But these political and cultural realities did not inhibit the pursuit of more capacious perspectives. Interestingly, and unusually if one looks at contemporary political and ethical thinking, their thinking struggled to combine universalist ambitions with a vivid sense of the specific contexts in which one had to act.

Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru frequently disagreed, but together they are the most notable examples in India's history of the effort to invent a modern ethics for Indians and India. How can a moral and integrated life be lived under modern conditions, where political power is concentrated in the state, but beliefs are multiple and diverse across a society? What is the relationship between morality and personal identity? How can public norms of morality be agreed upon? What can ensure that the institutions of modern politics—the state—will pursue moral ends by moral means? These were their questions, which mark them as more than merely nationalist thinkers—as men who tried to find a universal basis for the morality and the politics of a particular country.

All three saw the extent to which politics was going to become increasingly important in India, the dominant medium of public life. And all three, even as they intervened and acted in the realm of politics, dreaded the prospect that the expansion of politics would corrupt public life by reducing it to the cynical pursuit of material gains. All three understood that in a world in which religion was declining (as in the West) or in which religious faith existed in multiple forms (as in India), no particular religion or belief system could claim universal allegiance, no shared morality could be taken for granted. In the absence of a generalized and common religious faith, religion in its traditional sense could not claim to be a universal foundation, and moral beliefs were relativized. This spiritual situation was fertile territory for social conflicts. And so new, shared moral vocabularies had to be devised: and this could only be done through reasoned public debate—through procedures that could identify areas of overlapping moral commitments and then extend them.

If we treat such thinkers as remarkable merely within the context of Indian history, we do them an injustice. Their

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concepts and their methods address more general problems, not least the question of how to construe the relation between political power and the plurality of faiths. We tend to assume that universalist ideas are a feature only of Western theories. In fact, the differing universalisms of the twentieth-century tradition of public reason in India may be better suited to today's world, disjointed and disrupted by the claims of identity: they are more deeply and innately sensitive to the claims of diversity in the construction of a moral public life.

III.

WHAT SET TAGORE AND Gandhi apart from other Indians who wished to root public morals in religion was their recognition that no religion in its traditional sense could serve as the basis of a universal faith or morality. Thus, Gandhi's own intellectual itinerary involved a strenuous dismantling and re-assembling of religious traditions; and the result was a profoundly unconventional ethical sense, one that cannot be understood in the terms of traditional Hinduism. By opening himself to Islam, Christianity, and the folk traditions of Hindu devotion, he created his own moral language, which was profoundly respectful of existing religious faiths even as it moved beyond them. Tagore, in creating what he called his "poet's religion," which was "neither that of an orthodox man of piety nor that of a theologian," looked outside and beyond religious traditions to forge his spiritual faith, which he described as "the Religion of Man": a humanist faith in the capacities of man, and a belief in the transcendent powers of art and aesthetics.

Where Tagore and Gandhi clashed was in their valuations of the role and the force of reason. The difference was brought out clearly in their exchange over the Bihar earthquake in 1934. Tagore thought that Gandhi was sorely mistaken in his readiness to explain to his countrymen that the earthquake was a "divine chastisement" for persisting with the sin of untouchability. In Tagore's view, Gandhi's explanation sanctioned a kind of terrorism on the part of the divine order. When it came to explaining the natural world, Tagore was firm that reason and science must have priority. In this respect, Tagore granted a greater scope to reason than Gandhi did.

PERSONALLY, NEHRU WAS FAR closer to Gandhi than to Tagore. For Nehru, Gandhi was more than a father figure; he was something like a surrogate mother. Intellectually, however, the proximities were reversed: Nehru felt himself closer to Tagore, except that Tagore had a sharply defined sense of the limits of science and rational inquiry. The fact that science dealt in statistics and numbers, that its logic was probabilistic, meant that the domain of moral questions escaped it: moral questions required certainties, not probabilities. For Nehru, by contrast, the moral life was a constant pursuit of an elusive idea, and it had to allow testing and revision through the exercise of reason.

Nehru had a natural sense of the many-sidedness of reason, and saw how it encompassed diverse aspects of human life; but throughout his life he drew out and worried its limits. The instrumentalities of reason, as expressed by science or by politics, could in the absence of moral direction undermine themselves. Science, he wrote, had

> no knowledge of ultimate purposes and not even an understanding of the immediate purpose, for science had told us nothing about the purpose of life.... There is no visible limit to the advance of science, if it is given the chance to advance. Yet it may be that the scientific method of observation is not always applicable to all the varieties of human experience and cannot cross the uncharted oceans that surround us ... for there appears to be a definite stopping place beyond which reason, as the mind is at present constituted, cannot go.

Nehru also observed that science, if "uncommitted and isolated from moral discipline and ethical considerations, will lead to the concentration of power and the terrible instruments of destruction which it has made, in the hands of evil and selfish men, seeking the domination of others—and thus to the destruction of its own great achievements."

A life devoted to political reason, to the pursuit and fulfillment of political ambition, also stood in danger of subverting itself. In an essay that he published under the pseudonym "Chanakya" in the *Modern Review* in 1937, Nehru tried to uncover some of these moral dangers by subjecting his own political ambitions to a public critique. There were tactical reasons for his publishing this essay, known as "The Rashtrapathi," in this pseudonymous way; but it remains a rare piece of public self-criticism by a practicing politician. "Chanakya" wrote of Nehru's ability to win the support of crowds and of his political adeptness, and then declared that Nehru

> has all the makings of a dictator in him—vast popularity, a strong will directed to a well-defined purpose, energy, pride, organisational capacity, ability, hardness, and with all his love of the crowd, an intolerance of others and a certain contempt for the weak and inefficient. His over-mastering desire to get things done, to sweep away what he dislikes and build anew, will hardly brook for long the slow processes of democracy ... is it not possible that Jawaharlal might fancy himself as a Caesar?

So Nehru recognized in himself his will to power, and his enormous (and therefore potentially dangerous) political skill. In this, as on later occasions when he was prime minister, he expressed a fear of the temptations of power and a revulsion toward the mechanics of politics. This was not merely high-minded posing: it stemmed from a deep moral anxiety about politics as a career. Nehru understood that political success—of an individual, a movement, a party, or a state—could be corrupting. He had written, in *The Discovery of India*, that "today in the world of economics and politics there is a search for power and yet when power is attained much else of value has gone ... power has its limitations, and force recoils on itself." For a politician, success lay not merely in the ability to capture power, but also in the knowledge of how to deploy it for moral ends. Otherwise, political success was a promise of moral failure. But perceiving the limits of reason did not lead Nehru to abandon it. On the contrary, it drove him toward an expanded view of reason, through the steady "workings of the mind" and the workings of the pen—through practice.

IV.

OFTEN IN HIS PERSONAL LIFE, Nehru needed something like faith or certitude to sustain him: anyone who has spent close to ten years of his life in prison would need some such mental

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fortitude. In the mid-1930s, while in jail in Dehra Dun and Almora, he was hit by bouts of depression. His wife, herself isolated and ill, increasingly found faith in religion; his daughter was away in school; his mother was bedridden with a stroke; and he was without his father, in the past his bulwark in troubled times. He was angered by Gandhi's methods and bitterly critical of the leadership of the Indian National Congress, the great engine of the nationalist movement against British rule. His sense of isolation and helplessness seemed total. In his diary, he wrote that "I grow lonelier than ever. The home that father had built up so lovingly is going to pieces.... I am losing most footholds I had." And again, during his second long period in jail, in Ahmadnagar Fort in the 1940s, he grew dark. As the bombs fell in Europe, the freedom struggle and civil disobedience in India seemed to have run into the sands, and his own family life seemed to unravel. "In the mind where there was once certainty," he remarked, "doubt creeps in."

Yet even during these periods of personal and spiritual crisis, Nehru did not turn to the certitudes of religion to sustain him—and it was at every step a hard-won refusal. Instead he found refuge in writing: the mannered self-analysis of the *Autobiography* in the mid-1930s, and his major work of the 1940s, *The Discovery of India*. When Nehru found himself intellectually stranded or confused, his response was to articulate his confusion and thereby arrive at clarity. For a long time, these reckonings took the form of writing—letters, books, diaries; in later years, pressed for time, he turned to speechifying, and to his fortnightly letters to chief ministers. The prolixity of Nehru has a particular meaning: one senses a constant effort to reason out his notions and his views. It is hardly a coincidence that the figures who helped to define the tradition of public reason in twentieth-century India—Tagore, Gandhi, and Nehru—were all great letter-writers who ceaselessly engaged their correspondents in dialogue and debate. It was one of the tragedies of Nehru's life that, with the death of Tagore and then Gandhi, he was bereft of great interlocutors, of formidable intellectuals who could challenge his most significant beliefs.

To reason about one's moral beliefs is a more strenuous and troubling process than merely to use reason as a means to achieve particular ends. This sense of exertion that is required for the determination of one's moral principles is often visible in Nehru. Consider Gandhi's commitment to non-violence: could this be a supreme principle? Writing in jail, entrapped by the violence embodied in the modern state, Nehru subjected Gandhi's principle to rigorous scrutiny. Those not fortunate to have Gandhi's faith, Nehru confessed, are "troubled by a host of doubts ... [which relate to] the mind's desire for some consistent philosophy of action which is both moral from the individual viewpoint and is at the same time socially effective." Could the principle of non-violence make sense in politics? After all, the life of the politician is lived in constant contact with violence and the instruments of violence: "Violence is the very life blood of the modern state and social system.... Governments are notoriously based on violence," including the more covert, subtle violence of "false propaganda, indirect and direct through education, Press etc, religious and other forms of fear, economic destitution and starvation." "Neither the growth of reason nor of the religious outlook nor morality," Nehru wrote, in a passage that bore the influence of Reinhold Niebuhr, "have checked in any way this tendency to violence."

Did it make sense, then, in opposing a state—or in thinking about how one might use the powers of a state—to abjure violence as a tenet of faith? Nehru was here wrestling with the problem of how to wield power in a moral way. Could what was moral at the individual level become a principle of political and social action? Even when it came to a principle so fundamental to Gandhi's morality as that of non-violence, Nehru felt it necessary to reason through the argument. He refused to accept Gandhi's principle of non-violence simply as a dogmatic principle or a matter of religious faith; he insisted on subjecting it to a close intellectual examination, testing it against examples.

SUCH SELF-CRITICAL AWARENESS often characterized Nehru's struggles to determine his moral commitments. On the vexed question of how to handle one's opponents he and Gandhi exchanged thoughts in the early 1930s, when Gandhi's activism against untouchability was winning him enemies, especially among the orthodox Sanatanists, the devout defenders of Hindu faith, or dharma, who launched an abusive campaign against him. Writing from prison in 1933, Nehru noted how poorly his opponents tolerated differences of opinion—and he also recognized something of this brittleness in himself. "Under great strain all tolerance disappears, and their [the Sanatanists'] intolerance at present is a sign of the great strain you are putting on them," he wrote to Gandhi.

> It is all very well for the likes of [Sir Tej Bahadur] Sapru and me ... to talk pompously and in a superior way of our tolerance in matters of religion when neither of us has any religion worth talking about.... But touch either of us on some particular subject and you will find the raw side and there will be little of tolerance then. Who is more intolerant than you are in certain matters? The fact is real tolerance hardly exists; what goes under the name of tolerance is indifference. What we do not value we make a virtue of tolerating in others.

Nehru had no difficulty in admitting where his own ground might be shaky.

Moral reasoning was also practical reasoning: not the discovery of abstract principles, but the continuous self-conscious reflection on experience and history. "The necessities of today," Nehru wrote, "will force us to formulate a new morality in accordance with them. If we are to find a way out of this crisis of the spirit and realize what are the true spiritual values today, we shall have to face the issues frankly and boldly and not take refuge under the dogmas of any religion." Nehru's life, understood as an intellectual project, was an attempt to reconcile the claims of instrumental reason with the claims of ethical reason.

In the realm of policy and political action, there are many examples of how

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Nehru chose to deliberate rationally, to reason through an argument before adopting a course of action—and at times this involved going against his instincts. Perhaps the most well-known and instructive case was the demand, from the early 1950s, for the establishment of states based on language. After Partition, Nehru feared that any redrawing of India's internal boundaries along linguistic lines would further endanger the country's unity. But over a period of several years, in the face of demands (often violent) as well as arguments, he came to revise his views on the matter. Nehru has often been criticized for being dilatory and evasive on this subject; but by temporizing and refusing to give in immediately to popular passions, by allowing positions to be stated and gradually revised, he enabled a more satisfactory solution of the language issue to emerge—one that actually strengthened the Union and has endured remarkably well.

UNLIKE TAGORE OR GANDHI, Nehru found himself in command of a state, which is the most powerful structured concentration of instrumental reason that exists. The choices and the responsibilities that came with such power brought with them, for Nehru, a certain quality of nemesis, as Arnold Toynbee once pointed out. "It is more blessed," Toynbee wrote, "to be imprisoned for the sake of one's ideals than to imprison other people, incongruously, in the name of the same ideals. Nehru lived to have both experiences." It was the painful sense of the potential arbitrariness of power, and of the need to justify its uses, that urged Nehru toward a reasoned public morality.

Others might have turned to religion to find sources for such a morality. Nehru did not. One often hears the argument today that the institutions of the Indian state—as it becomes more democratic, as its political process becomes more inclusive—must become more "faith-based." But surely two cautionary lessons can be gleaned from the historical experience of Europe: first, that there is something disastrous in all attempts to define the character of the state in terms of the claims of religious faith, and to endow the state with a religious identity; and second, that the citizenry cannot ever safely relinquish its powers to a small number of political agents for more than short periods of time, that political power must be made accountable through the institutions of democracy. The relationship between these two lessons—the lesson of democracy and the lesson of the secular state—is today being tested in many difficult ways all over the world.

Nehru was one of the few Indian intellectuals who, through his study of the European experience, saw the vital importance of these two lessons: that democracy is the only acceptable standard of political legitimacy for the modern state; and that if democracy is linked to faith, the consequences will be catastrophic. Most importantly, he was also one of the rare Indian intellectuals who had studied not only European history but also Indian history, and he was able to relate his reading of European history to his own reasoned understanding of the pattern of Indian history—in particular, to his insight that the distinctive configuration of power and belief that all large-scale political entities in India had adopted was one in which political power kept a distance from the beliefs of society, and interfered only minimally.

V.

THE INDIAN POLITICAL SCENE is today dominated by a paradox. We observe plenty of politicians who profess to have religious faith, but we find it difficult to get any sense of moral depth from their characters, any sense of moral struggle or self-questioning over their actions and their policies. They seem to view politics and the capture of state power as ends in themselves: theirs is a purely instrumentalist understanding of reason *and* faith. And this hollowing out of the moral content of faith is symptomatic of a deeper and quite startling development in the domain of religion. Philosophers and intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth century tended to assume that religion, and matters of faith, would increasingly become private matters, that religion was being driven inward. In fact, quite the opposite has occurred. Religion today almost never refers to an inner space of contemplation and private struggle, and almost always to an outer realm of conflict and commotion. The interiority of religion has been all but lost. Religions today are more and more politicized. They aspire to capture the space of public morality, to define the content of public life.

It is important to see that Nehru's sense of the place of religion, and of the need to keep it separate from the state, was not based upon some hopeful view about secularization. Especially after the mid-1940s, he did not regard secularization as the ineluctable dynamo of history's movement, resulting in the elimination of religion through, say, economic development. For anyone of Nehru's historical intelligence, one clear lesson of the Partition of India was to drive home the ineliminable force of religion in Indian society, its rootedness—something that Nehru had already learned at the individual level through his engagement with Tagore and Gandhi, as well as with Congress Party colleagues such as the nationalist Muslim leader Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and C. R. Rajagopalachari, the first Indian governor general and a translator of Indian religious legends. Nehru's views about religion and the state were based not on a prospective optimism about the evanescence of religion, but rather on a retrospective pessimism about its persistence—and the dangers this posed if it should ever be linked to that most powerful modern form of instrumental reason, the state. It was an insight based on an understanding of the historical experiences of both Europe and India.

Today, as we survey the shattered nationalisms of the Balkans, as we feel collapsing about us the ruins of Arab nationalism, as we see the precipice on which nations such as Indonesia balance, it is more important than ever to appreciate the force of what Nehru understood. It is exactly religion's persistence—its fulsome presence as we stumble into the new century—that, far from undermining or disproving the force of Nehru's views on the subject, underlines their pertinence for us today. Each generation inevitably condescends to its predecessors. Indeed, there are many things that we can rightly claim to know and understand better than earlier generations did, better than Nehru may have. But on this particular point, he was wiser than the political and intellectual elites of India are today. We may disagree with him about his economic choices or his conduct of foreign policy, and we may not admire his style or aspects of his personality; but we must be able to separate between those of his ideas that retain their validity and force and those that do not.

Ultimately, the power and meaning of Nehru's life does not lie in the mere fact

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of his contingent acquisition of political power—his biographical good fortune. Its importance for India and Indians lies in the philosophical and political understanding that he worked out. It was his ability to comprehend the alien political experience of Europe, to interpret its relevance to India, and to assimilate it into the Indian experience that bestows upon him a continuing, indeed surpassing, importance. Gandhi can stand as a powerful moral exemplar, but he offers little with which to think about the central problem that India faces today: how to reconcile the modern Indian state with the thicket of Indian beliefs. Unlike Gandhi's, Nehru's life cannot be said to have been a spectacular moral performance—but he did leave a legacy of reasoning, of intellectual and political understanding, upon whose recovery depends the continuing viability of the Indian enterprise.

There is nothing in the professional routines of modern politics that is inherently uplifting. Unless India's politicians and its intellectuals push themselves to reflect more critically on the values and goals that they claim to uphold, they will be unable to arrest India's political decline. The situation is indeed curious: at the very top, India's intellectual elites are world leaders—in technology, in the natural and human sciences, in literature, in business; but the quality of its professional politicians is markedly inferior. They are good at winning power, but they are without moral intelligence. Politicians often plead that they must please and pander to their constituencies; but perhaps it is time to point out that the capacity to think intelligently not only about means but also about ends is more widely distributed across Indian society than some of its leaders would have us believe. And modern Indian history shows how the political life can be lived both morally and rationally, primarily in the exemplary figure of Jawaharlal Nehru, a politician without religious faith but in possession of the most profound and indefatigable moral sense. ■

Joseph Frank
The Grand Interlocutor

IDENTITY THEFT:
THE JEW IN IMPERIAL RUSSIA AND THE CASE OF AVRAAM URI KOVNER
By Harriet Murav
(Stanford University Press, 241 pp., $60)

ADMIRERS OF DOSTOEVSKY in his time and ours have been disturbed and puzzled by the anti-Semitism that became so virulent in his writings in the 1870s. One of his contemporaries took the trouble to voice his objections in a letter to the famous writer, and provoked a reply from him in several letters and a notorious essay in *Diary of a Writer*. The name of that correspondent is Avraam Uri (Arkady) Kovner, and he is the subject of this new book. If not for his exchange of letters with Dostoevsky, it is unlikely that he would be known at all today—or only to a very small group of specialists concerned with the obscure literature written in Hebrew, Yiddish, and Russian by Russian-Jewish writers in the middle and late nineteenth century. Kovner's correspondence with Dostoevsky, however, gave his name a certain prominence once he was revealed as the source of Dostoevsky's essay on the "Jewish Question."

Although Kovner would scarcely have aroused the curiosity of posterity except for this relation with Dostoevsky, he became notorious in his own time for quite a different reason. In 1875, while working as a clerk for the St. Petersburg Discount Lending Bank, which was owned by a Jewish financier and philanthropist, Kovner swindled the bank out of 168,000 rubles and was caught while trying to escape to the United States with his fiancée. Kovner's first letter to Dostoevsky was sent from Butyrki Prison in Petersburg in 1877, and it may well have aroused Dostoevsky's interest both for the acuity and penetration with which his work and ideas were discussed, and also because Kovner was behind bars. One should remember that Dostoevsky himself had lived in solitary confinement in the Peter-and-Paul Prison for approximately a year after his own arrest in 1849.

Still, Kovner's correspondence with Dostoevsky is only one incident in a life whose details offer a pathetically illuminating glimpse into the world of the Russian Jewish Pale (the western provinces of the Russian Empire) and the lives of the small group of young men struggling to break out of its cultural as well as geographic confines. Arkady Kovner was born in 1842 in what is now Vilnius (Vilna), a haven of Jewish learning for many generations. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, it also became the center for an attack on the reigning ecstatic and mystical Jewish religious movement known as Hasidism. The Hasidim were assailed from two sides: by Mitnagdim, rigorously devout and law-obsessed Jews of an almost morbid intellectualism; and by Maskilim, the secularizing proponents of Enlightenment, or Haskalah, which aimed both to free Jewish life from its devotion to a past conditioned by exclusion and oppression and to bring it into relation with the modern world. Moses Mendelssohn had been the chief inspiration of this latter movement in Germany, and his example soon spread to Eastern Europe.

SIX YEARS BEFORE HIS DEATH in 1909, Kovner published some autobiographical essays under the title *From the Notes of a Jew* (the title is worth noting, since by this time he had become, at least legally, a Christian convert), from which the details of his early life have become known. He was the third of eleven children, who grew up in destitution so extreme that he recalls his father weeping over the accidental loss of four rubles in the street. His father gave lessons and his mother sold grain products, but they lived more or less off the meager bounty of his father's brother, a scholar who had published a book of commentaries on the Talmud. A maternal uncle, who once visited the family, was the first person Arkady ever saw wearing European clothes.

At the age of four he studied the Bible, at six the Talmud, and at seven he wrote a play in Hebrew verse about

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Esther, the Jew who became queen of Persia and rescued her people from genocide. At nine he was placed in a rabbinical seminary run by the Russian government and staffed with Haskalah teachers. His older brother Savelii was a star student who later entered the University of Kiev, became a doctor, and wrote in Russian a book on Spinoza as well as others on the history of medicine. But Arkady became ill after a year, and his parents placed him in a yeshiva, a more traditional Jewish academy. He found the rote learning of the Talmud that he encountered there more stultifying than enlightening, and bitterly criticized it later. "I knew from the 'forbidden books' that somewhere there breathed and lived a whole world for which such questions as: was it permissible to use an egg laid by a chicken on a holiday ... were irrelevant," he wrote. "But this enchanting, alien world was inaccessible to me."

Kovner was married off at the age of eighteen against his will, without having become acquainted with his bride before the ceremony, and no relation of any depth existed between them, though she gave birth to a daughter and later to a son. He continued his Talmudic studies, supported as was customary by his wife's family, but his brother urged him to break away and come to Kiev. Arkady finally did so, pocketing a pearl from his mother-in-law to pay for the trip. Harriet Murav calls this his first "theft," implicitly accusing him of falsehood in telling Dostoevsky that the bank swindle was his only crime. That the two are comparable hardly seems persuasive, and it is worth noting that, so far as can be judged, this petty infraction was not held against him when he returned to his family again for a brief period before leaving once more.

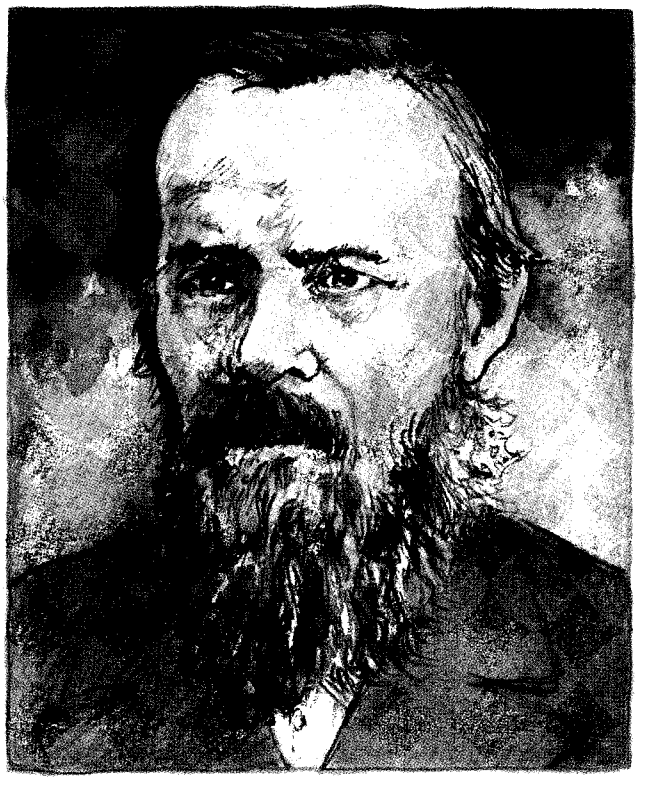
It was in Kiev, where he supported himself as a tutor in a Jewish family and remained for four years, that Kovner began to publish in the Hebrew-language press. As he later wrote to Dostoevsky, "This was in the sixties, when Russian literature and young people were celebrating the honeymoon of progress." The serfs had just been liberated by Alexander II, other reforms were being advocated and introduced in many aspects of Russian society, and for a few years—very few—Russian life seemed to be following a path leading to enlightenment and progress. A new group of radicals held center stage and inspired the young Jewish intellectuals of the time.

The most intransigent of these writers was Dmitry Pisarev, best known for "his nihilism, his refusal of all authorities, and his rejection of high culture and aesthetics in favor of science and utilitarianism," Murav writes. She cites a novella by the Russian-Jewish writer S. R. Ansky, called *Pioneers*, to illustrate Pisarev's popularity among Jewish students who considered themselves "freethinkers." Kovner became a devoted disciple. Indeed, it was through Kovner that Pisarev's ideas entered into the Jewish press. Some years later Dostoevsky dramatized Pisarev's point of view in his novel *The Devils*, in which, in the satirically tumultuous fête scene, a character asks whether the works of Pushkin or a pair of boots are more useful to Russian society.

Kovner posed a similar question about "usefulness" in the articles that he began to publish in Hebrew beginning in 1864 and in a book titled *Heker Davar*, or *The Inquiry*. These works produced a storm, because they assailed the preference of Hebrew authors for poetry rather than prose; for stylistic embellishment rather than contemporary concerns; for the cultivation of, and preoccupation with, the language to the point at which there was "no Hebrew literature in the European sense of the word." Without wishing to abandon the study of Hebrew, Kovner spoke of it as being "transitional," a way station toward the adoption of European languages.

By this time Kovner had moved from Kiev to Odessa and had become a staff member of a Hebrew newspaper called *HaMelitz*, or *The Advocate*, which had published his first articles. His notoriety attracted readers, but he soon quarreled with the editor and even secretly wrote a letter to the governor-general accusing the newspaper of being "an obstacle to the education of the Jews and their rapprochement with the Russian population." Kovner's second book in Hebrew was aimed directly at the newspaper. It consists of passages quoted from the paper followed by Kovner's "sarcastic commentary," which sometimes cites other works to reinforce his ridicule. He also included an alphabetized list of curse words in Hebrew to ease the task of all those whom he knew would lash out at him with fury.

Murav rather belabors this polemical creation with an elaborate commentary, viewing it as raising "the problem of identity and subjectivity that is a core question of acculturation," and concluding that Kovner here displays the lack of "an inner core of selfhood." Why this carefully composed and ironic attack reveals a lack of "selfhood" escapes me; nor is it particularly illuminating to learn that "his parody resonates with a postmodern view of subjectivity as a nodal point for various messages and discourses, constituted in and by language." Murav's book is occasionally marred by this sort of theoretical overkill, which dissolves historical reality into a blur of fashionable notions about acculturation and postmodernism. Fortunately, she also informatively fills in the background



Fyodor Dostoevsky by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

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of this little-known world with diligent particularity.

KOVNER FOLLOWED HIS OWN advice and began to write for Russian-language Jewish newspapers, but life became impossible for him in Odessa after the publication of his second book. A stint as a tutor in the Ural Mountains was followed by a transplantation to St. Petersburg in 1871. There he obtained a post on the influential newspaper *The Voice* and published a novel whose title, *Without a Label*, indicates his own ambition. The book deals with the lives of university students, none of whom is clearly Jewish, but Murav convincingly demonstrates that the important ones possess character traits ordinarily attributed to Jews in Russian society. One, named Renkov (an acronym for Kovner), is a thoroughgoing nihilist who insists that "there is no purpose whatsoever in the life of any human being." Murav cites a similar passage from one of Kovner's letters, but rightly remarks that in his journalism "his ethical vision embraces the universal values he had once described himself as abandoning."

The Voice was in favor of the assimilation and Russification of the Jews that was encouraged during the early years of Alexander II's reign but was regarded with considerable disfavor and trepidation by the conservative elements of the Jewish community. Kovner wrote a feuilleton called "Literary and Social Curiosities" that appeared regularly in 1872–1873, and Murav's chapter is the only serious discussion of it easily available in English. A feuilletonist could comment freely on whatever topic struck his fancy, and "political events, theatrical performances, art exhibits, and current court cases all appear together in the space of a single feuilleton." Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer*, which began to appear in 1873 and later blossomed into a monthly periodical, may be considered a feuilleton writ large. Many of the topics that Dostoevsky touched on are also broached by Kovner—corporal punishment in the schools, trials in the new jury system, suicide, domestic violence, and "the difficult position of women in Russian society generally." Like Dostoevsky, Kovner also attacks the growth in Russia of a modern industrial economy—"stock market[s], banks, railroads, insurance companies, and especially speculation."

One of Kovner's favorite targets was *The Citizen*, the weekly founded by Prince Meshchersky and edited by Dostoevsky in 1873–1874. Kovner wondered at the anomaly of the social-humanitarian author of *Poor Folk* and *Notes From the House of the Dead* taking the helm of such a committedly conservative publication, and he also criticized Dostoevsky's latest and most ferociously anti-radical novel, *The Devils*. The plot is based on the murder of an innocent member of a small revolutionary faction by his comrades out of fear of betrayal. Kovner accused Dostoevsky of not being "a true artist" because, after the public trial, he reproduced "whole sections of stenographic accounts of ready-made characters and ready-made speeches" (a charge not at all true), and his characters, in any case, were all "raving maniacs." He ridiculed Dostoevsky's insistence on "the need for suffering," and asked whether the Russian people had welcomed the Tartar invasion or regretted the end of serfdom. In his letter to Dostoevsky, Kovner confesses that he had done his utmost "to enter into a personal polemic with you, to challenge you to battle"; but "you silently ignored all my outbursts and did not gratify my egotism."

KOVNER LIVED IN THE HOME of an impoverished Jewish widow with four children, and fell in love with her oldest daughter, the tubercular Sofia. By this time he was supporting his ex-wife and two children in Vilna and helping, as much as he could, the indigent family of his beloved, whom he taught to read and to write. Owing to some disagreement with the influential editor of *The Voice*, he resigned and obtained a lowly position at the bank, where he was badly paid and badly treated. He wished to marry Sofia but lacked the means; he lived in fear of being deprived of his post; and he finally decided on the theft, which was carried out through a forgery of the signature of the bank's Jewish director.

The trial was a notable public event, and the prosecutor, N. M. Muraviev, later became minister of justice. Sofia's testimony and that of one of her sisters, who spoke of Kovner as behaving "as if our father had risen from his grave," obviously impressed the jury, who gave Kovner a relatively light sentence—guilty, but deserving of mercy. He was sentenced to four years in a penal battalion, but took advantage of a legal technicality to avoid even this and was simply sent into exile in Siberia. While waiting in prison Kovner wrote to Dostoevsky, and Murav devotes a chapter to their exchange of letters.

BY THIS TIME MURAV HAS DECIDED, on the basis of an article in *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, that Kovner is "an impostorous personality," whose whole life consists in assuming various roles; he is an impostor through and through, guilty of "identity theft." In relation to Dostoevsky, he assumes the role of Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment*, whose motive for his crime (or so Dostoevsky's character thought initially, and quite sincerely) was "humanitarian." ("For one life taken, thousands saved from corruption and decay!") Kovner himself wrote to Dostoevsky that, after carefully "decid[ing] that all banks are based on principles of delusion and swindle," he resolved to commit his crime in order to come to the aid of all those dependent on him as well as others of "the insulted and injured" (this phrase being the title of one of Dostoevsky's lesser-known novels).

Yet Murav concludes that "the motivation of Kovner's crime is difficult to pin down." She even suggests that Kovner's explanation of his crime in Dostoevskian terms may have sprung from some remarks made by the prosecuting attorney. Less merciful to Kovner than the jury—though one assumes they were hardly too favorably disposed to Jews—she refuses to be taken in by Kovner's assumed Raskolnikov identity. Murav substitutes for the tormenting personal situation in which Kovner was caught a cloud of references invoking Bakhtin, Lydia Ginzburg, Peter Brooks, and so on. According to her, "Kovner's dialogic address to Dostoevsky was overdetermined, marked both by the drama of acculturation and by the kind of literary confession typical of Dostoevsky's heroes."

One can agree with Murav that Kovner's letters to Dostoevsky, especially the first two, were carefully composed and written to obtain specific ends; but it

Ulysses
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is difficult to see them, as she tends to imply, only as calculated fakeries based on imitating the literary manner of their recipient. Dostoevsky himself, who hardly can be suspected of naïveté in such matters, took them very seriously, and wrote to Kovner that "I have rarely read anything more intelligent than your first letter to me (your second is a special case)." Kovner appeals to Dostoevsky for help in publishing a play that had been singled out for praise in a competition, as well as a story that had been approved by the censorship. Dostoevsky agreed to help, but neither was published and both have been lost.

More importantly, he told Kovner that he accepted the latter's explanation for his crime; in other words, that it was not committed solely for sordid reasons of material gain. He thus exonerated Kovner from the onus of being considered a common criminal. When Kovner added, however, that he felt no remorse whatever for the crime, Dostoevsky remonstrated, though with considerable tact ("I myself am not better than you or anyone," he wrote), that here Kovner had gone too far. "There is something higher than the conclusions of reason and all kinds of attendant circumstances to which everyone must submit . . . it's much better if I forgive you than if you forgive yourself."

ONE WOULD EXPECT, IN VIEW of Kovner's situation, that he would be, if not obsequious, then at least as deferential as possible. To be sure, he praises Dostoevsky as a writer in terms that the novelist obviously found insightful. Dostoevsky even comments, after Kovner chose *The Idiot* as his favorite novel, that "all those who have spoken of it as my best work have something in their mental formation that has always struck and pleased me." But while Kovner supposedly assumes the identity of a Dostoevskian character, even Murav has to concede that "he took on a role that no Dostoevskian character ever played. He defends the Jews."

Indeed, Kovner's letter contains a blistering attack on Dostoevsky's failure to recognize the rights of Jews to full civic equality in Russia. "Are you *really* incapable," he writes bluntly, "of attaining to the fundamental law of any social life that all citizens of a country, if they bear all the duties necessary for the existence of the country, must enjoy all the rights and advantages of its existence? . . . Why must all Jews be limited in rights, and why must there be special punitive laws for them?" Moreover, he cannot understand Dostoevsky's "hatred of the *zhid* [an insulting word] which appears in almost every issue of your *Diary*." As he remarks, "I have suffered more than a little because [of the prejudices of my people]. . . . But I will never concede that unscrupulous exploitation is in the bloodstream of the Jewish people."

Dostoevsky's chapter on the "Jewish Question" in *Diary of a Writer*, written as a direct answer to Kovner's letter, cites passages from it without mentioning the author's name. And in his reply Dostoevsky accuses the Jews of sucking the lifeblood of the Russian peasantry, assails Judaism as containing a messianic claim to world domination, and charges the Jews with maintaining a state of their own inside the state in which they live, thus giving them more power than the helpless Russian peasant. Yet he ends with a call for granting Jews full civic equality—unless, to be sure, their religion contains "deeper mysteries" that make this impossible. (Just what this means is left unspecified.)

Murav's discussion of these letters places the two correspondents on an equal level, but this hardly does justice to the facts. She refuses to give Kovner any credit for what can only be considered an act of courage and dignity. He could not restrain himself from challenging, on behalf of the Jews, the very person—a famous and influential author in the bargain—from whom he was hoping to obtain some alleviation of his extremely difficult situation. Indeed, while continuing to ask for help in placing his manuscripts, and stating his willingness to accept Dostoevsky's assurance that he is not an anti-Semite, Kovner nonetheless objects sharply to a passage in the article. Dostoevsky had written that, if the Jews had the power, they would turn the Russians into slaves, skin them alive, and slaughter them to the last man. Although Kovner calls this an "unintentional paradox," since Dostoevsky had also written feelingly about the Jews in another section and advocated according them civic equality, Kovner nonetheless retorts: "How can the Russian people not hate the Jews, when its best representatives publicly express their opinion of the latter as wild beasts?"

KOVNER'S LATER LIFE IN Siberia was not an unhappy one. He found private employment almost immediately, and with the help of his former prosecutor Muraviev he ultimately (and ironically) obtained a post in a government agency auditing state finances. Why Muraviev, a notorious anti-Semite, came to Kovner's aid remains a mystery. As the situation of the Jews in Russia worsened considerably in the latter half of the century, Kovner sent a lengthy memorandum to Muraviev—later published as a book called *The Language of Facts: About the Isolation of the Jews*—once again insisting that they be granted civic equality. He married a much younger Gentile woman, nominally becoming a Christian (Jews were not allowed to intermarry), and spoke of his so-called "conversion" only as a legal formality. Murav agrees that "the conversion is meaningless from the perspective of reli-

The Potato Lovers

Of course, I hushed.
It's what they wanted.
My eyes were dry as powder.

Good dog, I buried
grief that night
in the funeral parlor.

Paternal hugs
stored in a trunk,
not yet tagged unseemly,

would be held against him
later, rotting cloth
of a suit no longer

a la mode. I'd mourn
in sleep, spend
a lifetime wondering

what it was I needed
to forgive. And draw
crooked trees afloat,

without roots, believing
in the strength of men,
hearing again and again

Mama's carping judgment
from the widow's throne:
I knew she'd crack.

ELISABETH MURAWSKI

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gion," but she nonetheless views it as "another way of negotiating a new reconciliation between Jewish and Russian identity." Whether it took on any such significance for Kovner himself remains highly dubious.

Kovner wrote privately not only to Dostoevsky and Muraviev but also to Tolstoy. (Murav seems to have missed this epistle, to which Tolstoy never replied.) He also wrote another novel, *Around the Golden Calf*, which Murav discusses too briefly. But she devotes a valuable chapter to Kovner's correspondence with V. V. Rozanov, which is much more copious than his letters to Dostoevsky. Although little known outside Russia, Rozanov is now considered one of the most original prose stylists of his time, and was an extremely idiosyncratic if somewhat disreputable figure. As a young man he had married Dostoevsky's headstrong and intransigent ex-mistress Apollinaria Suslova, who was considerably older than he was. She later refused to give him a divorce, though he lived with another woman and fathered several children. He also wrote a still-valuable book, *Dostoevsky and the Legend of the Grand Inquisitor*, which is one of the first serious attempts to cope with the religious and philosophical implications of Dostoevsky's novels.

As a philosophical essayist, Rozanov published in both reactionary and progressive newspapers at the same time, writing in each from a completely opposite social and political point of view; but he ranged far more widely, and one of his favorite topics was sex. He was a fervent opponent of the ascetic aspects of Christianity (he has been called the Russian Nietzsche), and he praised the biblical Hebrews for integrating their religion with a concern for the body and its functions; he was particularly impressed with circumcision as a link between man and God. But his approval of the ancient Hebrews did not extend to their modern descendants, and he was a regular contributor to *New Times*, the most Judeophobic newspaper of the day.

Kovner and Rozanov's correspondence has never been published in its entirety; it remains in the manuscript division of the Moscow Library. It is regrettable that Murav, who consulted the original documents, did not provide a more detailed and balanced account of their contents. Kovner's first letter took issue with the accuracy of some aspects of Rozanov's articles on Jewish rituals and Judaism; much of it deals with such questions. Kovner apparently wrote quite freely about his sexual life, in response to Rozanov's promptings, and even prepared "a diary of his exploits, written in the style of Casanova." But one letter of Kovner's also contains an indignant outburst about the Kishiniev pogrom in 1903, urging, though without success, that Rozanov denounce it publicly. "How disgusting," Kovner wrote, "that *New Times* is completely silent about the Kishiniev pogrom." Several years later he also bluntly criticized an article by Rozanov because of its anti-Semitic description of the Jewish people.

In a brochure published in 1906 titled "What I Believe," Kovner repeats some of the arguments that he made against religion in his letter to Dostoevsky, but also holds up for admiration the first-century Jewish sage Hillel, who was famous for his response to the challenge of defining the essence of Judaism in a few words: "What you do not wish to happen to you," he replied, "do not do to your neighbor; that is the essence of the entire Torah; all the rest is commentary." Rozanov refers approvingly to this work, and presumably to Hillel as well, in his sympathetic obituary of Kovner, ironically enough printed in *New Times*. Labeling the deceased "a Jewish Pisarev," Rozanov also identified him as "the very same [person] who in February of 1877 wrote Dostoevsky a letter in defense of the Jews."

Murav explains that she chose to study her subject because "in his many efforts at transculturation, Kovner assumed different names, languages, and ideologies and modified his autobiography depending on his listener." This is perfectly true, and the value of her book lies in her depiction of the various cultural worlds in which Kovner moved and the interaction of his fate with other Russian-Jewish intellectuals who faced the same extremely tormenting problems of transculturation. But she tries too hard to adapt his personality to the dialectic of her general categories, and she overlooks—or refuses to recognize—his deep burning sense of indignation at social injustice, especially when it concerned the Jews. He always refused to remain silent on this subject, no matter to whom he was writing and whom he might offend. And so it is fitting to conclude by citing a fact from Murav's bibliography: Avraam Uri Kovner's first book in Hebrew was re-published in Tel Aviv in 1947. I expect he would have been pleased. ■

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

G.I. Jane

I TOLD YOU SO. THERE. I'VE SAID it. I've been trying to avoid those words for weeks, as the situation in Iraq has gone from grim to grimmer to straight down the toilet. But, as someone who (unlike THE NEW REPUBLIC) opposed George W. Bush's desert odyssey long before Baghdad was shocked and awed, I see red every time I hear of yet another colossal screwup in this administration's postwar "strategy." Still, angry as I am about Iraq, I nonetheless feel a pang of sympathy for all those Bush fans who increasingly find themselves laboring to defend the indefensible (e.g., the continued employment of George "Slam Dunk" Tenet or Donald "Don't Show Me the Torture Pics" Rumsfeld). Whatever outrage-related stress I'm suffering, it's clearly negligible compared with the complete mental meltdown occurring on the right, particularly in regards to the torture of Iraqi internees at Abu Ghraib.

AS PHOTOS (AND MAYBE EVEN VIDEO!) trickle out documenting the misdeeds of American soldiers, conservatives are scrambling to find an acceptable party to blame. A few, like George Will, have risen brilliantly to the occasion, offering the administration a tough-love critique. But most have treated the two most logical candidates—the Pentagon and the White House—as off-limits. For them, the current unpleasantness must be somehow pinned on a reassuringly liberal villain. You can actually hear the gears whirring in their heads as they cycle through the usual suspects: Bill, Hillary, unions, tree-huggers, taxes, the French—surely some left-wing bogeyman can be found to take the heat off poor Rummy!

FORTUNATELY, A TRIO OF RIGHT-WING chicks—Linda Chavez, Peggy Noonan, and the perennially unbalanced Ann Coulter—have leaped into this breach, peddling the ideologically soothing notion that Abu Ghraib is the sad, but predictable, by-product of permitting women in the military. (Ah, feminism! The perfect fall gal!) Coulter, true to form, doesn't bother with logic. In her recent sit-down on "Hannity and Colmes," the blonde bomb-lobber simply asserted that women should not be allowed in the military because, "in addition to not being able to carry even a medium-sized backpack, women are too vicious." In Coulter's case, this may be true. (This is, after all, the gal whose prescription for fighting Islamist terrorism is to "invade their countries, kill their leaders, and convert them to Christianity.") But, such exceptions notwithstanding, we have several thousand years of evidence suggesting men are more than capable of perpetrating major-league atrocities without any help from the fairer sex. Besides, aren't conservatives the ones always yammering on about how, in their zeal to feminize the military, liberals risk making it soft and weak and too prissy to wage war? Be crazy if you want to, Ann. But at least be consistent.

NOONAN DOESN'T BLAME A GENDER-blended military for the problems at Abu Ghraib; she blames feminism for producing the type of woman capable of committing such crimes. The women's auxiliary corps of yore would never have been so "cruel," so "coarse," so "vulgar," sniffs Noonan. "They apparently did not think they had to prove they were men, or men at their worst." Noonan, it seems, doesn't have a problem with military women per se. She just wants them confined to supportive, nurturing, appropriately ladylike roles in keeping with their traditional calling as civilizers of men.

CHAVEZ OFFERS THE MOST INVOLVED—and incoherent—argument against babes in uniform. Her catchall thesis is that "the new sex-integrated military interferes with unit cohesion and results in less discipline" by encouraging the kind of rampant sex (and pregnancy!) that plagues today's armed forces. But it's not clear how you get from the "sexual tension" Chavez says this creates to torture. In fact, while the absence of G.I. Janes might mean less sex (and certainly fewer pregnancies) among the troops, it's not obvious how this translates into less "sexual tension." It would, however, most likely encourage a variety of alternative "tension relievers" of the sort that normally keep conservatives up at night: promiscuous sex with local women (which would really help America's image among Iraqis), increased patronage of prostitutes, and, of course, the kind of male troop-on-troop action that dare not speak its name. If anything, you'd think the absence of women in the military would make lonely, sexually frustrated male troops *more* likely to abuse detainees, not less.

PERHAPS RECOGNIZING THAT HER DISsertation on sex has nothing to do with the controversy at hand, Chavez asks, "So what does this have to do with those pictures of mistreated prisoners?" Her answer: "Take a look at the faces of those soldiers again, especially the female soldiers. ... They look like they're showing off at some wild party, trying to impress everybody with how 'cool' they are." Chavez is apparently suggesting that the naughty boys and girls at Abu Ghraib saw torture as some sort of kinky mating ritual—that abusing Iraqis was all about catching the eye of that hot MP in the next barrack. Had they been blissfully free from "sexual tension," the young male G.I.s at Abu Ghraib would have been far less likely to sodomize prisoners with chemical light sticks—since young men left to their own devices *never* act like deranged, testosterone-fueled delinquents.

BEHIND ALL THE NOVEL THEORIES IS this basic truth: The Bush administration never makes a mistake. Sure, American personnel in Iraq have been stretched dangerously thin thanks to a certain defense secretary's reluctance to call up more troops. It's also true that terrified, inexperienced reservists received virtually no training in preparation for sensitive postings. And military intelligence probably did "request" that internees be softened up a bit to aid interrogations. But all of this was part of a brilliant plan that would surely have succeeded if not for some misguided lefty notion about gender equality. Which is why the most important task the Pentagon faces these next few months isn't upping our troop count, or investing the international community in Iraq's future, or even ferreting out who ordered the abuse of Iraqi prisoners. It's drumming every coarse, vulgar, uppity, sexually corrupting woman out of the military. And, if that doesn't work, we can always blame the gays. **MICHELLE COTTLE**

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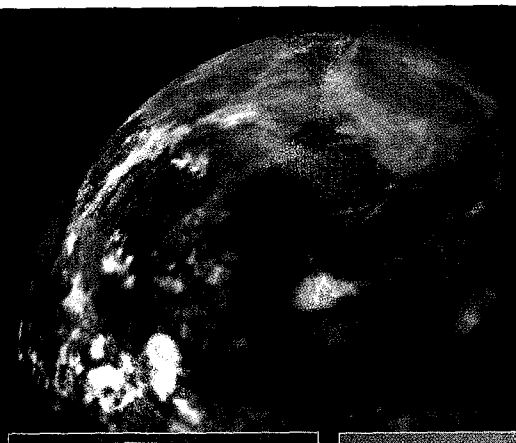
Princeton Brings You the World



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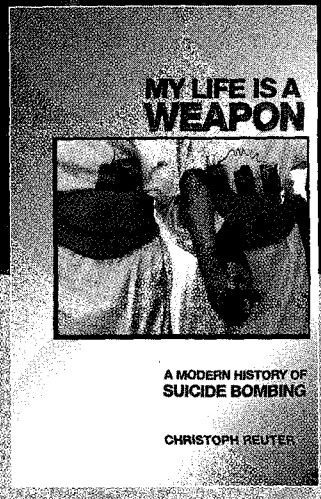

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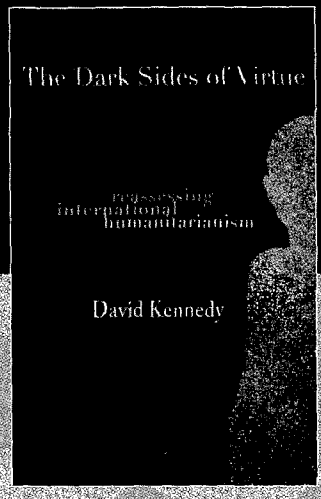

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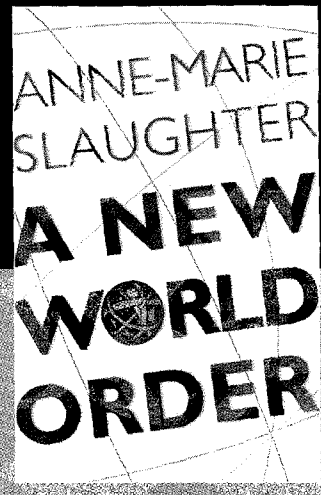

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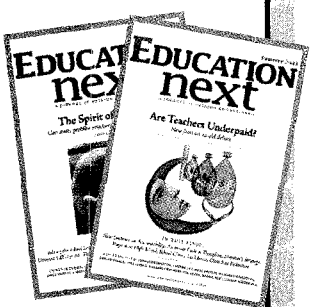

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